

# ABDUCTED

## The Lord's Resistance Army and Forced Conscription in Northern Uganda

JUNE 2007



Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations

Human Rights Center  
University of California, Berkeley

Payson Center for International Development  
Tulane University



## **Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations**

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&  
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The Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations conducts research in countries experiencing serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. We use empirical research methods to give voice to survivors of mass violence. We work to ensure that the needs of survivors are recognized and acted on by governments, U.N. agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. We help improve the capacity of local organizations to collect and analyze data about vulnerable populations so that their human rights can be protected.

The Berkeley-Tulane Initiative has undertaken a range of projects. At present, the Initiative is

- assisting centers for former child soldiers in Northern Uganda improve their capacity to collect and analyze data and provide follow-up services to returnees;
- helping the Victims and Witnesses Unit of the International Criminal Court develop questionnaires to improve their services for witnesses;
- assisting Human Rights Watch improve its capacity to collect and analyze empirical data on violations of human rights; and
- collaborating with the International Center for Transitional Justice to conduct research on transitional justice mechanisms in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Uganda.

The Initiative provides fellowships to graduate students with empirical research skills at the University of California, Berkeley and Tulane University to work with our partnering institutions.

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# Abducted

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By

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## **Executive Summary**

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Since the late 1980s, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a spiritualist rebel group with no clear political agenda, has abducted tens of thousands of children and adults to serve as porters and soldiers. Rebel commanders have forced girls, some as young as 12 years old, to serve as sexual and domestic servants<sup>1</sup> and forced their fighters to inflict horrific injuries by cutting off the ears, noses, lips, and limbs of defenseless civilians. Experience of forced conscription into the LRA is traumatic and varies in scope and intensity. Children and youth – some as young as 7 and 8 years old – have been forced to mutilate and kill civilians, including members of their own families and communities. At the same time, the Ugandan government and the international community have failed to protect civilians from abductions and other assaults in northern Uganda.

In the early 1990s, children who escaped from the LRA or were captured by Ugandan soldiers were often paraded in the streets in the hope that someone would identify them. This treatment prompted a group of parents of abducted children to establish the Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO), a reception center in Gulu, in 1994. More than 20,000 children and youth have since passed through GUSCO and other reception centers throughout northern Uganda. However, this number does not account for the thousands of children and youth who do not pass through a reception center.<sup>2</sup>

A special Child Protection Unit of the Ugandan People's Army (UPDF) was established to routinely deliver to the reception centers children and youth who have been captured in gun battles or escaped from the LRA. Upon arrival, the children are given a medical exam and treated for diseases and other ailments. Those suffering from war wounds are sent to hospitals in Gulu and Kampala. Housed in separate units, boys and girls usually spend the day together undertaking a range of activities, including counseling, song and dance, sports, and vocational training. Most children and youth stay at the centers for 2 to 6 weeks. Child mothers generally stay longer, often up to 6 months or more. During this time, staff members attempt to trace the whereabouts of a child's parents or relatives. Some centers maintain a "meeting room" where parents or relatives can meet with a child, often accompanied by a social worker to prepare the family and child for their eventual reintegration. Children are eventually provided with a resettlement package and sent back to live with their families.

Since 2006 security has vastly improved in northern Uganda, thanks to a decrease in fighting between the LRA and the Ugandan army and on-going peace talks. Possibly as a result, there are

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<sup>1</sup> The LRA refer to these girls and young women as "wives." LRA leader Joseph Kony is said to have had as many as 67 "wives." In a speech delivered in 1977 he said: "King Solomon also had between 600 and 800 wives and God never punished him." Kony prefers young girls because they are presumably free of AIDS. His commanders who perform well in the field of battle have been rewarded with "wives." See Els De Temmerman, *Aboke Girls: Children Abducted in Northern Uganda* (Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers, 2001), p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Nor does it include adults who have left the LRA and returned to civilian life. "Youth" in Acholi culture generally pertains to individuals between the ages of 14 and 30. See Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, and Roger Horton, *The State of Youth and Youth Participation in Northern Uganda: Findings from the Survey for War-Affected Youth*, A Report for UNICEF Uganda, September 2006, pp. iv, vii.

few, if any, former LRA abductees staying at reception centers as of April 2007. Even so, an estimated 1,000–3,000 children and youth still fill the ranks of the LRA.<sup>3</sup>

In December 2005, the Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations launched *The Database Project* to better document abduction and help improve the capacity of 8 reception centers in the northern districts of Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Apac, and Lira to collect and analyze information about former LRA abductees. At the time, these centers were still providing housing and care to hundreds of children and youth. The objectives of the project were:

1. to improve the data-management capacity of all reception centers;
2. to digitize all reception center data;
3. to measure and analyze the overall incidence of abduction based on those data;
4. to assess characteristics associated with abduction; and
5. to provide recommendations aimed at improving the process of reintegrating former LRA abductees into their communities.

These are the main findings and recommendations from the research:

1. ***Former LRA abductees can be distinguished by subgroup based on gender, length of abduction, experience, and exposure to violence.*** Programs aimed at providing psychosocial assistance to former abductees and helping them reintegrate into their communities should be mindful of these characteristics. In general, more programs need to be developed to provide *all* children and youth in northern Uganda, including former abductees, with educational opportunities, vocational training, meaningful jobs, and leadership training.
  - ***The majority of former abductees (61%) were 10 to 18 years old when they arrived at the reception centers.*** The mean age of females was 16 years old (S.D. 7.0), and the median 15. The mean age of males was 20 years old (S.D. 8.6), and the median 17.
  - ***Girls and women represent 24 percent of the former LRA abductees registered at the 8 reception centers included in the survey. Females stayed longer with the LRA than males. Young women between the ages of 19 and 30 tended to stay longer with the LRA, averaging 4.5 years.*** Three factors may explain why women 19 to 30 years old stayed with the LRA for long periods of time. First, the LRA abducts girls and women to serve as long-term sexual partners and domestic servants to commanders. Fourteen percent of females who passed through a reception center in the district of Apac self-reported that they had been “given” to commanders and 10 percent reported giving birth while in captivity. Second, women forced to serve as “wives” are likely to be kept in encampments and villages located some distance from combat zones, offering less opportunity to escape, surrender, or to be captured by army troops. Finally, women who have babies while in captivity may fear trying to escape or simply chose not to leave the rebel group.

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication with Cornelius William of UNICEF and Ester Atim of Amnesty Commission, December 2006.

- ***LRA abductees have suffered a wide range of abuses during their captivity.***

Information about these abuses is contained in data collected at three of the eight reception centers. At the same time, it must be recognized that many – if not most – of the young people and children of northern Uganda have been affected in some way by the violence in northern Uganda, including displacement, loss of family members, witnessing horrific events, and lack of access to health care, education, and other services.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a disproportionate amount of attention has been paid to former LRA abductees in the form of media attention, “resettlement packages,” and direct cash aid to returnees and their families. This situation has caused resentment in some communities<sup>5</sup> and diverted the focus away from the general situation of children and youth in northern Uganda. Rather than creating a set of general services for formerly abducted people (e.g. resettlement packages), emphasis should be placed on integrated, community-based programs that invest in youth and children in northern Uganda, including those who were never abducted. More programs need to be developed to provide children and youth with educational opportunities, vocational training, meaningful jobs, and leadership training.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, a targeted response should address specific needs of subgroups of abducted people, including reintegration and psychological support services.

2. ***Estimates of the number of LRA abductions are higher than previously suggested, and the whereabouts of most abducted people remains unknown.***

By triangulating data from different sources on the number of former abductees, we estimate that the LRA has abducted 24,000 to 38,000 children and 28,000 to 37,000 adults as of April 2006.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the whereabouts of most former LRA abductees remain largely unknown. Many former abductees have returned home without passing through a reception center, or passed through a reception center but information about their abduction was never recorded or later lost. While some abductees remain with the LRA, many have died on the battlefield or at the hands of the abductors. More work is needed to identify the number of people who have gone missing in northern Uganda and to investigate their whereabouts. Cross-cultural studies have shown that families wish to know the fate of their missing relatives and, if they have died, to receive their remains.<sup>8</sup>

3. ***More information is needed to better understand the scope and intensity of abduction in northern Uganda.***
- This reports provides basic information based on registered formerly abducted people who passed through the reception centers. The proportion of

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<sup>4</sup> Phuong Pham, Patrick Vinck, Marieke Wierda, Eric Stover, and Adrian di Giovanni, *Forgotten Voices: A Population-Based Study of Attitudes about Peace and Justice in Northern Uganda*, International Center for Transitional Justice and Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley, July 2005. See also Morten Boas and Anne Hatloy, Fafo, *The Northern Uganda IDP Profiling Study*, Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees of the Office of the Prime Minister and and United Nations Development Programme, Vol. 1, September 2005.

<sup>5</sup> See also Erin Baines, Eric Stover, and Marieke Wierda, *War-Affected Children and Youth in Northern Uganda: Toward a Brighter Future, An Assessment Report*, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, May 2006, at 18-19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> In our previous population-based study the scope and nature of abduction included persons who had been abducted for periods ranging from a few hours to several years (see note 4). Generally, former LRA abductees registered by the reception centers have been abducted for long periods of time.

<sup>8</sup> See Eric Stover and Rachel Shigekane, “Exhumation of Mass Graves: Balancing Legal and Humanitarian Needs” in Eric Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein (eds.), *My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), at 85-120.

abducted people who do not go to reception centers is not known and may vary geographically, and across age and gender. More work is needed to investigate exposure to violence in general and abduction specifically in northern Uganda.

- 4. *Data collection and information management is critical to document population vulnerability and human rights violations and to inform policies.*** Our study found a significant disparity in the capacity of reception centers to collect, store, and analyze data on former LRA abductees. Reception centers recognized this shortcoming in 2005 and requested that this project be undertaken. A standardized system for collecting and analyzing data on former child soldiers needs to be created to assist the work of reception centers and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs worldwide. Such a system will be useful for several reasons. First, it will enable these institutions to record basic demographic and medical information about child soldiers, as well as qualitative information about their experiences in captivity. Second, having information in a standardized form will improve the ability of data managers to quickly retrieve and cross-reference information as they try to reunite former child soldiers with their parents and other relatives. Third, the analysis of aggregate data on child soldiers can reveal patterns of abduction and captivity that could be useful to prosecutors at the International Criminal Court and others investigating war crimes, including cases of forced conscription. Finally, a standardized database will help centers and DDR programs track former child soldiers who have returned to their families and provide follow-up services.
- 5. *LRA abductions of children and adults increased during and after large military campaigns against the LRA rebels.*** The Ugandan military and police need to do more to protect civilian populations. Furthermore, better monitoring of trends on abduction in real time could act as an “early warning” system of LRA activity in a given area and signal the need for greater protection of the affected population. The international community should continue to develop programs to protect vulnerable populations in northern Uganda.
- 6. *LRA abductions are geographically more dispersed than previously reported. Abductions are also concentrated in specific locations.*** The vast majority of former abductees who have passed through the reception centers (89%) were from the districts of Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader. This finding suggests that aid organizations providing services to former abductees should broaden the geographical scope of their outreach and programmatic activities.
- 7. *The numbers of former abductees arriving at reception centers have declined since 2004.*** This may be due to a decrease in hostilities. However, any increase in fighting could result in a sudden surge of abductees arriving at the centers. Moreover, if a peace agreement is reached, it is almost certain that a number of children and youth will leave the LRA and begin arriving at the reception centers or go directly to their homes. These scenarios suggest that local governmental agencies and reception centers should be prepared to provide shelter, food, and other services in the event of a sudden influx of returnees. Additional services should be provided to other vulnerable groups in the community in order to avoid creating the perception of unequal support and thus increasing any rift between the returnees and their communities.



## **Introduction**

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Since the late 1980s, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a spiritualist rebel group with no clear political agenda, has abducted tens of thousands of children and adults to serve as porters and soldiers. Rebel commanders have forced girls, some as young as 12 years old, to serve as sexual and domestic servants<sup>9</sup> and forced their fighters to inflict horrific injuries by cutting off the ears, noses, lips, and limbs of defenseless civilians. Of the 2,585 people interviewed in a survey conducted in 2005 in four districts of northern Uganda, 31 percent said that one or more of their children had been abducted by the rebel group, 23 percent said their children had been mutilated, and 45 percent said they had witnessed the killing of a family member.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the Ugandan government and the international community have failed to protect civilians from abductions and other assaults in northern Uganda.

Experience of forced conscription into the LRA varies in scope and intensity but is considered to be traumatic. Children and youth – some as young as 7 and 8 years old – have been forced to mutilate and kill civilians, including members of their own families and communities. LRA abductees “have had violence inflicted upon them – typically beatings, imprisonment, forced labour, and witnessing of killing.”<sup>11</sup>

How violence has affected the psychosocial well being of former LRA abductees over time remains a largely empirical question. Former abductees who have committed or experienced high levels of violence show “substantial increases in emotional distress, as well as poorer family relations.”<sup>12</sup> Abduction results in “mild to moderate psychosocial consequences.”<sup>13</sup> Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression, however, were found to be significantly higher among those who experienced abduction compared to those who only witnessed violence and those who had little exposure to the conflict.<sup>14</sup>

LRA abductions of children and youth began in the early 1990s. When children escaped from the LRA or were captured by Ugandan soldiers, they were often paraded in the streets with the hope that someone would identify them. This treatment prompted a group of parents of abducted children to establish the GUSCO reception center in Gulu in 1994. More than 20,000 children and youth have since passed through GUSCO and other reception centers located in towns throughout northern Uganda. However, this number does not account for the thousands of children and youth who go straight home rather than pass through a reception center.<sup>15</sup>

A special Child Protection Unit of the Ugandan People's Army (UPDF) routinely delivers to the reception centers children and youth who have been captured in gun battles or escaped from the

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<sup>9</sup> See Els De Temmerman, *supra* note 1, at 150.

<sup>10</sup> Phuong Pham et al, *supra* note 4, at 20-22.

<sup>11</sup> See Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, and Roger Horton, *The State of Youth and Youth Participation in Northern Uganda: Findings from the Survey for War-Affected Youth*, A Report for UNICEF Uganda, September 2006, at 54. The SWAY study surveyed more than 1,000 households and nearly 750 male youth between September 2005 and March 2006.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*, at 68-69.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*, at vii.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Vinck, Phuong Pham, Eric Stover, and Harvey Weinstein, “Exposure to War Crimes and its Implications for Peace Building in Northern Uganda,” *forthcoming*.

<sup>15</sup> Nor does it include adults who have left the LRA and returned to civilian life.

LRA. Upon arrival, the children are given a medical exam and treated for diseases and other ailments. Those suffering from war wounds are sent to hospitals in Gulu and Kampala. A few children have been sent to the United States and Europe for specialized surgery. Housed in separate units, boys and girls usually spend the day together undertaking a range of activities, including counseling, song and dance, sports, and vocational training.

Most children stay at the centers for 2 to 6 weeks. Child mothers<sup>16</sup> generally stay longer, often up to 6 months or more. During this time, staff members attempt to trace the whereabouts of a child's parents or relatives. Some centers maintain a "meeting room" where parents or relatives can meet with a child, often accompanied by a social worker to prepare the family and child for their reintegration. Children are eventually provided with a resettlement package and sent back to live with their families.

Little is known about the long-term effects on children and youth who have survived LRA abduction. One recent study concluded that

reception centers were a valuable resource for many [formerly abducted persons]...Their most important role was found to be the provision of a safe space in which [formerly abducted persons] could adjust to the transition from the LRA to the internally displaced camps.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, formerly abducted male youth in Kitgum and Pader were found to achieve lower education levels "not simply because of the time away from school and the difficulty of returning to school as a young adult, but also because of the impact of abduction on the resources available for paying fees."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The term "child mothers" is used loosely in northern Uganda and may refer to youth over 18 years old who are single mothers.

<sup>17</sup> Tim Allen and Mareike Schomerus (London School of Economics), *A Hard Homecoming: Lessons Learned from the Reception Center Process in Northern Uganda, An Independent Study*, USAID and UNICEF, June 21, 2006, p. vii.

<sup>18</sup> Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, and Roger Horton, *supra* note 11, p. v.

## **The Database Project**

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In December 2005, the Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations launched *The Database Project* to better document abduction and help improve the capacity of the reception centers to collect and analyze information about LRA abductees. The objectives of the project were:

1. to improve the data-management capacity of all reception centers;
2. to digitize all reception center data;
3. to measure and analyze the overall incidence of abduction based on those data;
4. to assess characteristics associated with abduction; and
5. to provide recommendations aimed at improving the process of reintegrating former LRA abductees into their communities.

The project began with an assessment trip to northern Uganda in late 2005. The assessment team found that reception centers used different intake forms to register former abductees who passed through their facilities. Nearly half of the centers failed to enter this information into a database because they lacked a computer, trained staff, financial resources, and/or time. Staff at the reception centers recognized that poor information management was undermining their ability to monitor and evaluate the return of former abductees to their communities and to provide follow-up services.

From January to April 2006 two graduate students, under the supervision of the research team, worked with the reception centers to gather available data on paper or in other forms for digitization in Microsoft Access 2003 and to develop databases and data management systems at each center.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Data Source***

Of the nine reception centers operating in early 2006, eight reception centers collaborated with The Database Project. Seven centers had either no digital record of the intake of former LRA abductees or used MS Excel to enter the data, and one center had an existing Access database. The Rachele reception center in Lira chose not to participate in the project. Data from the eight participating reception centers were aggregated in an integrated database.

*Table 1: Reception Centers Databases*

Agency /Center	Number of fields in Database	Main Type of Information	Nbr. of cases	Time span	
				Based on Date of Abduction	Based on Date of Arrival at Center
Caritas, Gulu	29	Demographics	2,048	01/1988	01/1988
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		–	–
		Location of origin		08/2004	07/2005
		Minimal follow-up info			
Caritas, Apac	84	Demographics	192	10/1996	06/ 2003
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		–	–
		Location of origin		10/2005	07/2005
		Health/social info			
GUSCO, Gulu	28	Demographics	3,118	04/1990	06/2001
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		–	–
		Nature of Return		02/2004	12/2005
		Location of origin			
KICWA, Kitgum	15	Demographics	3,775	01/1988	02/1998
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		–	–
		Location of origin		02/2006	02/2006
		Minimal follow-up info			
CCF, Pader	34	Demographics	1,016	01/1994	03/2000
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		–	–
		Location of origin		03/2006	03/2006
		Health/social info			
World Vision, Gulu	15	Demographics	11,163	12/1986	06/1995
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		–	–
		Location of origin		12/2005	4/2006
		Minimal follow-up info			
CPA, Kitgum	13	Demographics	1,745	02/1991	01/2002
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		–	–
		Location of origin		02/2006	03/2006
		Minimal follow-up info			
CPA, Lira	43	Demographics	320	08/1996	01/2002
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		–	–
		Nature of return		10/2003	10/2003
		Location of origin			
		Health/social info			

**Data Integration**

After the development of the database and digitization of the intake forms, data sets from the eight partnering reception centers were cleaned and merged. Cleaning for errors occurred at three levels. First, incomplete or inaccurate entries were marked as “missing.” Second, location information was completed to represent all the administrative divisions (e.g. some databases did not include county names, but those could be inferred from other information). Third, duplicates

were identified within organizations and between organizations. A case was deleted if all the information was identical to another case. When two cases shared not all but several items, they were flagged as possible duplicates.

Following cleaning and aggregation, the total number of reception center cases was 22,759. In addition, 337 cases were flagged to indicate potential duplicates. A total of 518 cases were deleted because of duplication. Only 17 fields that were common to all the reception centers' intake forms were included in the aggregated database.

*Table 2: Aggregated Database*

Agency /Center	Number of fields in Database	Main Type of Information	Nbr. of cases	Time span	
				Based on Date of Abduction	Based on Date of Arrival at Center
All	17	Demographics	22,759 + 337 flagged	12/1986	06/1995
		Date of abduction/ release/ arrival and departure		-	-
		Location of origin		04/2006	04/2006

**Limitations**

The aggregated database contains valuable information that can help provide a more accurate picture of the formerly abducted population in Northern Uganda. However, the data have serious limitations and thus interpretations should be approached with caution. Major limitations to the data are related to the protocol of data collection, the nature of capturing historic data, and the aggregation of data collected using non-standardized instruments and protocols. Because the project builds on data collected over many years, it was impossible to complete missing information or correct erroneous entries.

***A Non-Probability Sampling of Former Abductees***

Reception centers only started functioning in the mid-1990s and thus information about abducted children and adults before this period is not included in the reception center databases. Reception centers also report that some paper-based intake forms were lost due to poor conservation. In addition, it is estimated that only about 43 percent of all abducted children pass through a reception center.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the aggregated database does not reflect the total number of former abductees and does not constitute a random sample. A more detailed analysis of estimated numbers of abductions is provided on page 20 and following in this report.

***Missing Data***

Information about former abductees is missing in most of the databases. Missing data includes fields such as date of arrival at the center, dates of abduction and escape, as well as location of abduction. Data are usually missing for one of two reasons: either the information was not gathered or it was illegible. In addition, poor data collection leads to confusing or inaccurate data. For example, when asked where they were abducted, some children said they were abducted at home or at school, while others provided a geographic location such as the name of a district, county, subcounty, camp, or village. It was beyond the scope of this project to locate former abductees to complete or clarify this missing data.

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<sup>19</sup> Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, and Roger Horton, *supra* note 11.

***Duplication***

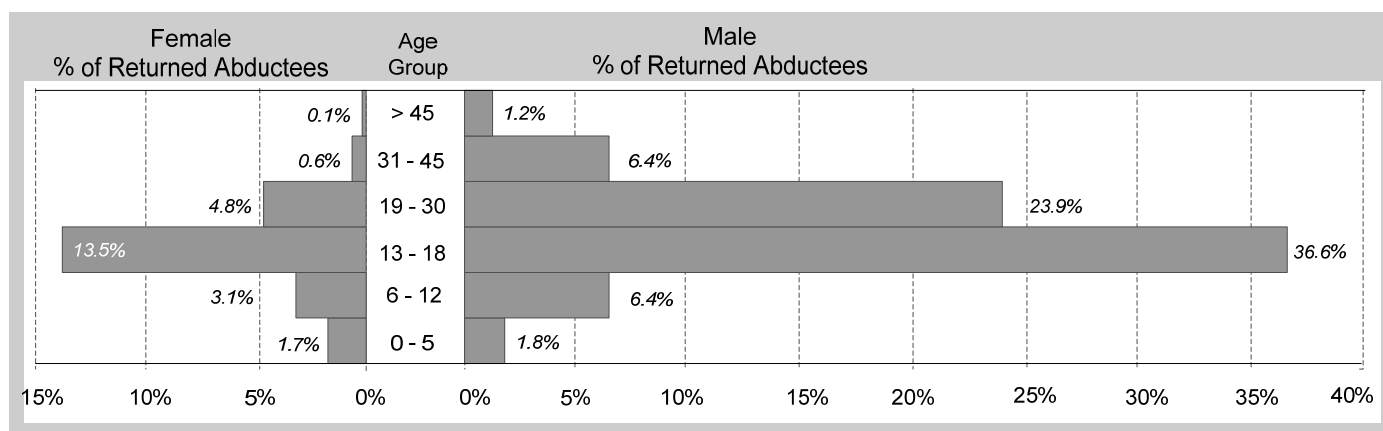
Despite thorough cleaning of the data, it is possible that duplicates still exist within a reception center or between centers. Comparing entries was only possible on a limited number of fields. It is also possible that similar names have been spelled differently or that former abductees provided different dates of birth or residences. It was also impossible to compare entries with the database from the Rachele reception center since that center chose not to participate in the research.

## Findings

### Demographics

A total of 22,759 individuals were included in the aggregate reception centers database, excluding the cases from Rachele reception center. Although most of the reception centers were established to serve children, a little over one-third (34%) of all registered former abductees were over 18 years old and some were as old as 81.<sup>20</sup> Those younger than 12 years old represented 8 percent of the registered former abductees, including 4 percent who were born in captivity (897 children). The majority of the former abductees at the reception centers were 13 to 18 years old (37%) and 19 to 30 years old (24%). With respect to gender, 24 percent of the former abductees were female and 76 percent were male. The mean age of females was 16 years old (S.D. 7.0), and the median 15. The mean age of males was 20 years old (S.D. 8.6), and the median 17. The difference in mean age was statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Figure 1: Age-Gender Distribution of Returned Abductees



### Length of Abduction

The average length of abduction among former abductees reporting to reception centers was 342 days and the median number of days of abduction was 92 days. Overall, 16 percent of the former abductees were abducted for a week or less, 35 percent for a month or less, and 52 percent for 3 months or less. Twenty percent were abducted for over a year.

Length of abduction varied significantly between gender ( $p < 0.01$ ). Girls and women were, on average, abducted for nearly 2 years (643 days) – more than twice the average length of abduction for boys and men (258 days). Thirty-four percent of the females had been abducted for over a year, compared to 18 percent for the males.

<sup>20</sup> Age was based on age upon arrival at the reception center. Discussion with reception center staff confirmed that, while rare, reception of elderly people did occur.

*Figure 2: Gender and Length of Abduction*



To better understand the risk factors of abduction, two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and curvilinear regression were employed to test the relationship between the length of captivity and sociodemographic characteristics. We found two factors that were associated with length of captivity: gender and age. The main effect of age and gender were both statistically associated with the length of captivity as well the interaction between them (F-Statistic=229.8, p-value=.0001). For the younger age groups (0-5, 6-12, 13-18, 19-30 years), females were in captivity longer than males. However, for the older age groups (31-45 and 45+), men were in captivity longer than women. Regardless of gender, former abductees in the age group 0-5 were abducted over the longest period of time, averaging 949 days. This is likely due to the fact that a majority of these infants were born in captivity.

Considering the effect of gender, the group with the longest average abduction was that of women 19-30 years old, with an average 1,581 days spent in captivity, roughly 4.5 years. This group represents about 5 percent of all former abductees, and possibly constitutes the group most likely to be abducted to serve as sexual partners and servants to LRA commanders, hence the length of captivity. Among men, length of abduction showed less variation across age groups (except for infants). A recent study by the Uganda Ministry of Health and World Health Organization conducted in 2005 found that there is a deficit in young males between the ages of 20 to 30 years among the population in camps for internally displaced persons,<sup>21</sup> an age category that roughly corresponds to the peak in abduction.

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Health of Uganda, UNICEF, and World Health Organization, *Health and Mortality Survey among Internally Displaced Persons in Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader Districts, Northern Uganda*, July 2005.



Figure 3: Length of Abduction Across Age and Gender (Average Number of Days)

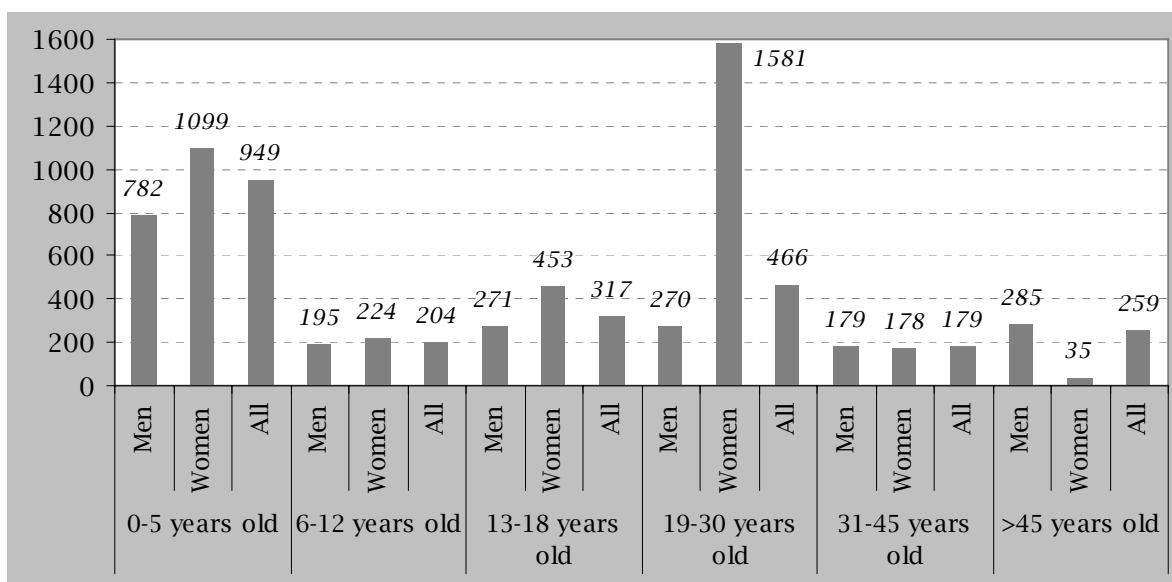


Table 3: Factors Associated with Length of Abduction

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-statistic	p-value
Intercept	21465810.193	1	21465810.193	53.045	< 0.01
Age Group	49276192.736	5	9855238.547	24.354	< 0.01
Sex	25479105.786	2	12739552.893	31.481	< 0.01
Agegrp * Sex	744070790.248	8	93008848.781	229.837	< 0.01
Error	7540263268.951	18633	404672.531		
Total	11168424557.000	18649			

- Computed using alpha = .05

- R Squared = .161 (Adjusted R Squared = .160)

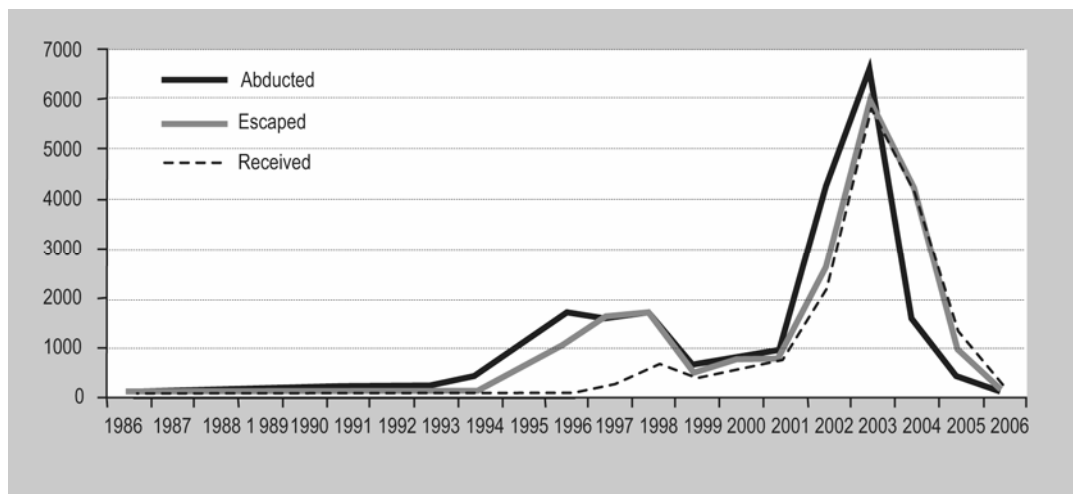
### Period of Abduction

Figure 4 illustrates the number of times children and youth were abducted by the LRA and later escaped and were received by the reception centers. Two periods – 1995 to 1998 and 2002 to 2004 – show the highest number of abductions. The mid-1990s corresponds to the start of the registration of returnees at reception centers and to a major military offensive by the Ugandan army. As early as 1991, the Ugandan government had begun arming local defense groups, which, in turn, triggered a violent reaction from the LRA. Rebels increasingly targeted civilians suspected of collaborating with the government.<sup>22</sup> They also started to employ abduction as a systematic tactic to recruit fighters, instill fear, and punish civilians seen as collaborating with the government. In 1995, as the fighting increased, the Ugandan government began moving people from their villages to internally displaced persons camps, reportedly to protect civilians from rebel attacks.

<sup>22</sup> See Tim Allen and Mareike Schomerus, *supra* note 17.

Toward the late 1990s fewer former abductees were reporting to the reception centers, likely reflecting the lower frequency of abduction during this period of peace initiatives. In 2001–02, as peace talks collapsed, the number of abductions rapidly increased. Fewer than 1,000 children and youth reported being abducted in 2001. That figure rose to 4,000 in 2002 and to over 6,500 in 2003. The number of abductions decreased in 2004 (~4,000) and 2005 (~1,000). Figures for 2006 are incomplete, but stood at less than 200 by mid-2006. As peace talks are underway in Sudan, a large number of LRA members are expected to leave the rebel force.

Figure 4: Abduction, Escape, and Return Over Time



### Geography of Abduction

The aggregated database contains information on the place of origin for 22,501 former abductees. Ninety-nine percent (22,460) were from Uganda. Most former abductees came from Gulu (43 percent), Kitgum (25 percent), and Pader (21 percent). Eighty-nine percent were from these three districts. Four percent were from Lira, 4 percent from Apac, 1 percent from Katakwi, and 1 percent from Adjumani. Less than 1 percent of the former abductees were from nine other districts. In addition, 34 people were from Sudan, 4 from Congo, 2 from Kenya, and 1 from Rwanda.

Map 1 below presents the absolute number of former abductees by subcounty of origin. The second map (Map 2) presents the same information per 10,000 people in the population (prevalence rate), which adjusts for the population size in the subcounty of origin. For example, if there are 50 former abductees in a subcounty with 5,000 people, the prevalence rate will be 100 per 10,000 people.<sup>23</sup>

Fourteen subcounties had at least 500 registered former abductees. They were all located in Gulu (Atiak, Bungatira, Lamogi, Awach, Koro, Odek, Lalogi, Paicho), Kitgum (Kitgum Matidi, Labongo-Amida), and Pader (Atanga, Acholi-Bur, Pajule). Looking at prevalence rates, one subcounty had 928 former abductees per 10,000 inhabitants, meaning that roughly 9 percent of the population in that subcounty had been abducted and registered at a reception center. Six subcounties registered an abduction prevalence of over 4 percent: Kitgum Matidi (585/10,000) in Kitgum; Awach (556/10,000), Palaro (517/10,000), Patiko (478/10,000), and Lalogi

<sup>23</sup> The population figure used to compute the rates are based on the 2002 Census. Because abduction took place over a period of nearly 20 years, these are not exact rates but they provide an approximation for the current prevalence of abduction among the population.

(415/10,000) in Gulu; and Pajule (448/10,000) in Pader. Another 35 subcounties, all in Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader, registered an abduction prevalence of over 1 percent (100 registered former abductees per 10,000 people). Outside of Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader, the highest registered abduction prevalence is found in Lira: Okwang subcounty (96/10,000 people) and Orum subcounty (61/10,000).

Although the mapping suggest some patterns in abduction, with higher numbers of registered abducted people east of Gulu and south of Kitgum and generally in the vicinity of urban centers, it should be noted that registration of former abductees may be influenced by the location of the reception centers. For example, the proportion of former abductees who register at a reception center may be lower in Orom compared to Kitgum Matidi because the subcounty is further away from reception centers, and not because there are fewer abductions there. In addition, data on registered former abductees from the Rachele center in Lira were not made available and could not be represented in this mapping. However, the number of former abductees who have passed through the Rachele center is unlikely to affect significantly the reported prevalence.

Figure 5: Map of Formerly Abducted People (FAP) by Subcounty of Origin

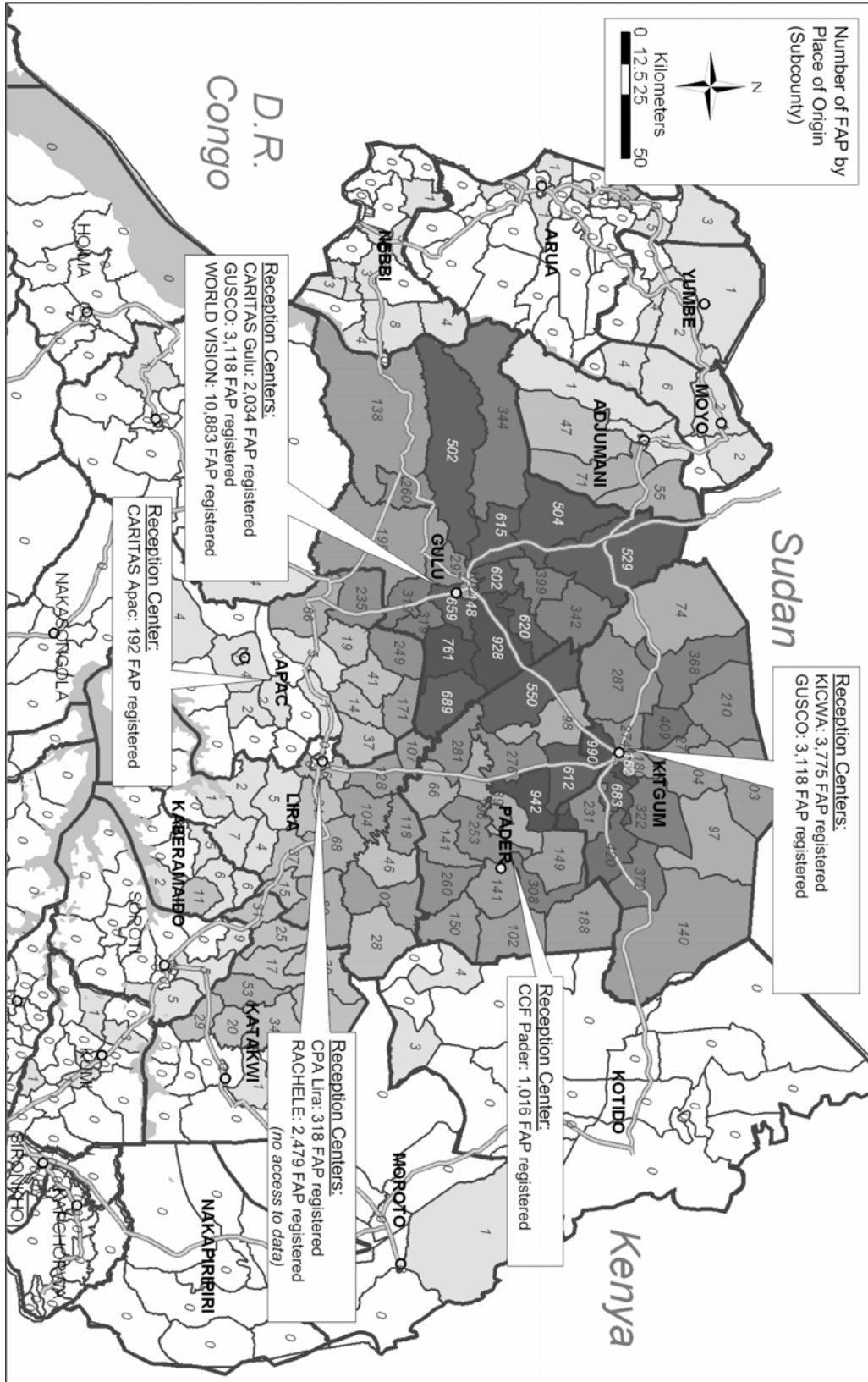
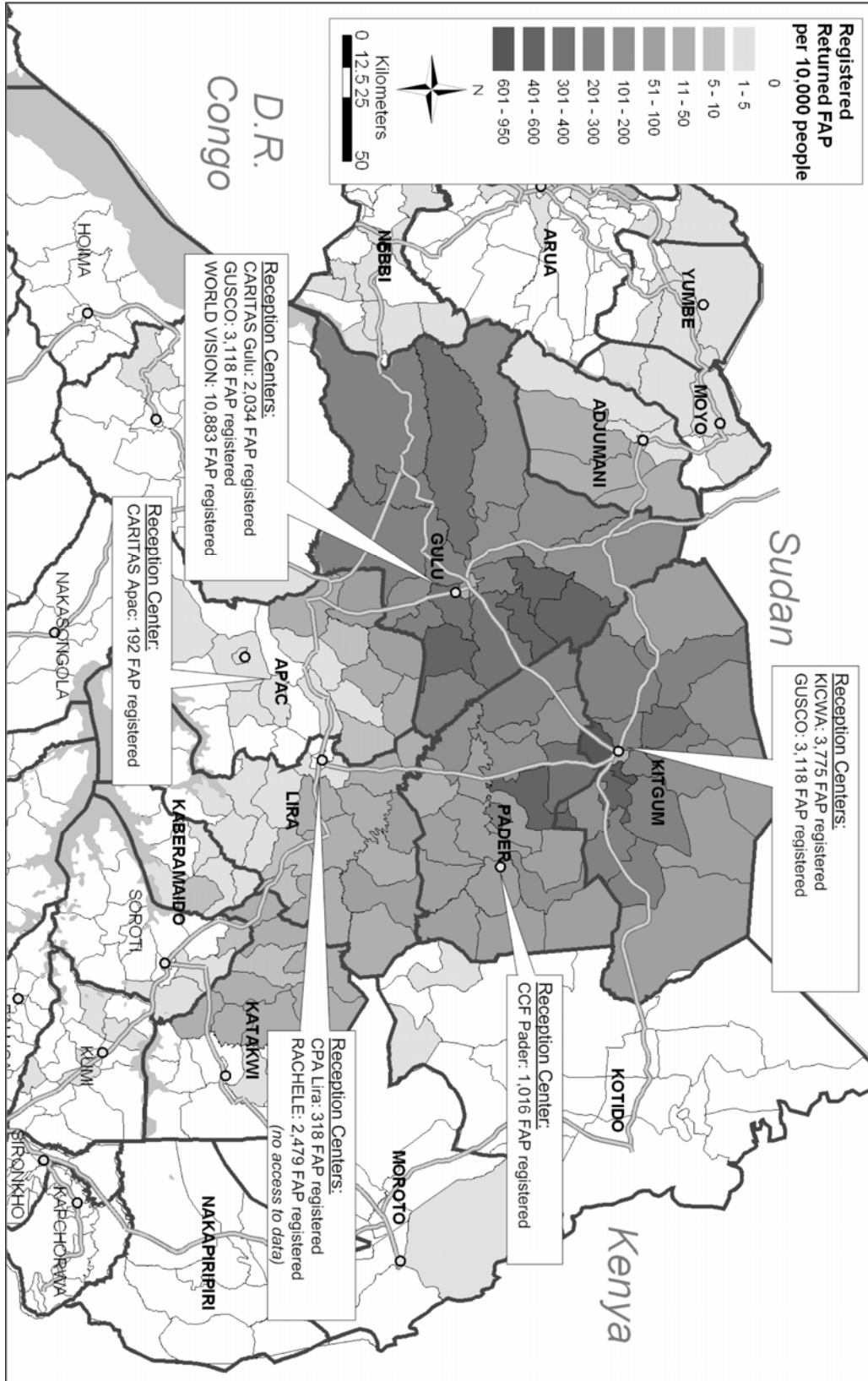


Figure 6: Formerly Abducted People (FAP) per 10,000 People by Subcounty of Origin



### **Experience of Abduction**

Because no standard tools exist across reception centers, the available information common to all former abductees is relatively limited. However, additional information is available for some reception centers. This partial information provides a deeper understanding of the characteristics and experience of some of the former abductees. This information is organized in two sections: 1) maternity and abduction and 2) exposure to violence.

### ***Maternity and Abduction***

Women represent only 24 percent of the former abductees received at all reception centers. However, this study found that women experienced a longer average stay in captivity than men, except among the older age group (>30). Women aged 19-30 years old averaged 4.5 years in abduction, more than the average of any other gender-age group. This finding may reflect the LRA practice of abducting girls and women to serve as sexual partners and servants to LRA commanders. This finding is further supported by evidence from some reception centers documenting the systematic use of women for sexual encounters.

Data on 192 former abductees received from May 2003 to July 2005 at the Caritas reception center in Apac show that 14 percent of the females had been 'given' to commanders and 10 percent reported giving birth while in captivity. Seven percent of women who passed through the Caritas reception center in Gulu reported giving birth while in captivity. Five percent of the 2,048 former abductees at the Caritas center were born in captivity. Data from the Rachele reception center show that 9 percent of the 2,479 who went through the center between 2003 and 2006 were born in captivity. Children born in captivity (157) represented a little less than 2 percent of the 10,883 former abductees who have passed through the reception center operated by World Vision since 1995. Finally, less than 1 percent of the former detainees received at the reception center operated by Christian Counseling Fellowship (CCF) in Pader were born in captivity.

### ***Exposure to Violence***

Reception centers typically do not collect information on exposure to violence among the former abductees, although narratives about the abduction experience exist and some detailed accounts have also been published.<sup>24</sup> From a quantitative point of view however, few estimates on exposure have been published,<sup>25</sup> and they do not specifically focus on former abductees but rather on exposure among the total population. According to data from the Caritas reception center in Apac, 80 percent of the 192 former abductees were forced to carry loads. Fifty-eight percent of the former abductees reported being tied up, 31 percent witnessed other former abductees participate in killings, and 15 percent said they participated in killings themselves. The center also highlights some characteristics of the abduction itself, showing that about half of the former abductees had been abducted during the night (46%) and that many were not abducted alone in a family but frequently with brothers (21%) and/or sisters (11%). While abducted, 42 percent of former abductees reported being attacked by Ugandan army troops and 6 percent were injured. Moving around with the LRA, 8 percent said they had been to Sudan.

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<sup>24</sup> Els De Temmerman, *Aboke Girls: Children Abducted in Northern Uganda* (Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers, 2001); Tim Allen and Mareike Schomerus (London School of Economics), *A Hard Homecoming: Lessons Learned from the Reception Center Process in Northern Uganda, An Independent Study*, USAID and UNICEF, June 21, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Phuong Pham, Patrick Vinck, Marieke Wierda, Eric Stover, and Adrian di Giovanni supra note 4; Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, and Roger Horton, supra note 11.

*Table 4: Experience of Violence*

<b>Experience of Violence At Time of Abduction</b>		<b>Experience of Violence While with the LRA</b>	
Beaten at abduction	128 (67%)	Was forced to walk far	152 (79%)
Tied up at abduction	112 (58%)	Witnessed killing of abductee	94 (49%)
Given load to carry at abduction	151 (79%)	Participated in killing	28 (15%)
Brother was also abducted	41 (21%)	Saw abductee participate in killing	59 (31%)
Sister was also abducted	21 (11%)	Was beaten or tortured	124 (65%)
With family at time of abduction	62 (31%)	Received military training	33 (17%)
		Fought/Ambushed UPDF	11 (6%)
		Attacked by UPDF	81 (42%)
		Injured during attack	12 (6%)
		Experienced hunger or thirst	109 (66%)
		Has been to Sudan	15 (8%)
		Fought in Sudan	11 (6%)
		Was given to commanders*	11 (14%)*
		Had child during captivity*	8 (10%)*

\* Among female only

At the Caritas Reception Center in Gulu, former abductees were further asked what, in their opinion, was the main reason for beating or killing abducted people. Failing to walk or walking too slowly was the most frequently reported reason for beating and torture (45%) and was also frequently associated with killing (28%). Former abductees identified attempting to escape as a main cause of beating and torture (14%); it was also the most frequently reported reason for killing abductees (34%).

*Table 5: Reasons for Torture and Killing in the LRA*

<b>Main Reason for Torturing or Beating Formerly Abducted People</b> (self-reported, n = 83)		<b>Main Reason for Killing Formerly Abducted People</b> (self-reported, n = 58)	
Failing to walk/Walk slowly	37 (45%)	Could not walk/Walk slowly	16 (28%)
Escape	12 (14%)	Escape/Attempted escape	20 (34%)
Did not follow order	8 (10%)	No reason/To prove a point	6 (10%)
No reason	4 (5%)	UPDF/Soldiers	2 (3%)
Failing to carry load	2 (2%)	Failing to carry load	2 (3%)
Stealing/Money	4 (5%)	Weak	2 (3%)
Registration	2 (2%)	Do not know	4 (7%)
Other	14 (17%)	Other	6 (10%)

At the CPA in Lira, data on 151 former abductees included some psychosocial assessment. Data showed that 55.6 percent experienced flashbacks of their experiences during their abduction, 22 percent experienced nightmares, 8 percent experienced multiple symptoms (i.e. flashbacks, nightmares, sadness, sleeplessness, and withdrawal), 3 percent had difficulty sleeping, and 3 percent experienced sadness.

Often former abductees have no direct family to whom they can return. Data from the CPA reception center in Lira showed that 44 percent of the 320 former abductees had lost their father, 22 percent had lost their mother, and about 20 percent had lost both parents. The figures were

relatively lower among the 3,118 former abductees received at the GUSCO center. Seventeen percent reported the death of a father and 4 percent reported the death of a mother. Sixteen percent did not know the status of their parents.

Based on the World Health Organization and Uganda Ministry of Health's Internally Displaced Persons Health and Mortality Survey in 2005, the age and sex pyramids in the Acholi region (Gulu, Kitgum, and Lira) showed a deficit of males between the ages of 20 and 30 and that children under the age of 15 constitute more than half (55%) of the population.<sup>26</sup>

### **Estimating the total number of abductions**

#### ***Counting the abducted***

The database of registered formerly abducted people does not provide an exhaustive count of all abducted people in northern Uganda.<sup>27</sup> According to the database, 22,759 people returned to a reception center from the LRA after being abducted and were registered. The aggregated data from Rachele reception center showed that an additional 2,472 were registered there, for a total of 25,231. This number does not take into account people who were abducted by the LRA and have not returned, people who were abducted by the LRA and returned but did not go through a reception center, and people who did go through a reception center but were not registered or whose records were lost.<sup>28</sup> Triangulation with several other sources, however, allows making inferences on the number of abductions:

- As part of its activity, the database project undertook the digitization of data collected by Concerned Parents Association (CPA) through community canvassing. The community canvassing database was incomplete after 2003. For the 1986–2003 period, the database holds 35,644 cases, including 18,117 children (<18). Basic frequencies for the Community Canvassing Database are presented in Annex 2.
- UNICEF published in 2001 a report on abduction in Uganda. According to their data, 28,603 people had been abducted in northern Uganda from 1986 to 2001, including 9,818 children.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> World Health Organization and the Republic of Uganda Ministry of Health. Health and mortality survey among internally displaced persons in Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader districts, northern Uganda. July 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Abduction – being forcibly taken away by armed persons (UNICEF) – may range from a few hours to several years.

<sup>28</sup> Several reception centers kept only paper records of the people they received and many of those records, especially in the mid 1990s, were lost or destroyed.

<sup>29</sup> UNICEF, Abductions in Northern and Southwestern Uganda: 1986–2001.



*Table 6: Abduction Figures from Multiple Sources*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Time period</b>	<b>Number of Adults</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Age Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Reception Center Database Project including Rachele reception center data.</i>					
	1986–2001	3,474	4,446	59	7,979
	2002–2006	4,612	10,232	100	14,944
	Year unknown	388	1,726	194	2,308
	<i>Total</i>	<i>8,474</i>	<i>16,404</i>	<i>353</i>	<i>25,231</i>
<i>Community Canvassing Database (CPA)</i>					
	1986–2001	14,984	15,723	132	30,839
	2002–2003	2,318	2,394	93	4,805
	<i>Total</i>	<i>17,302</i>	<i>18,117</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>35,644</i>
<i>UNICEF</i>					
	1989–2001	18,399	9,818	386	28,603

For the period 1986–2001 the total number of abductions is established at 28,603 people (UNICEF) to 30,839 (CPA), with wide differences in the number of children: about 16,000 for CPA and about 10,000 for UNICEF. The number of registered returnees by date of abduction is provided by the reception center database, including aggregate figures for Rachele reception center. The rate of registration in the database for the period 1986–2001 can therefore be computed.<sup>30</sup> That rate ranges from 19 percent to 24 percent among adults, a relatively low rate possibly due to the fact that reception centers are primarily aimed at children. Among children the rate of registration in the database ranges from 32 percent to 51 percent, depending on whether the UNICEF or CPA data are used as an estimate of the total number of abduction. Those who are not in the database (1) may have returned through a reception center but the records were lost, (2) may have returned but did not go through a reception center, and (3) may not have returned. Figures for children are consistent with recent findings from UNICEF and USAID that only about 50 percent of the children who returned from the LRA pass through a reception center.<sup>31</sup>

For the period 2002–2006, UNICEF or CPA data are not available on estimates of the total number of abductions. However, the reception center data show that over 4,612 adults and 10,232 children were registered at reception centers over that period. If we apply the 1986–2001 rate of registration of 25 percent for adults and 50 percent for children, we can estimate the total number of abductions over the 2002–2006 period at roughly 19,000 adults and 22,000 children. If we consider that reception centers have been more effective at registering abducted people after 2001, with a 50 percent efficacy increase, the rate of registration would be approximately 35 percent for adults and 75 percent for children, with total number of abductions estimated at 13,000 adults and 14,000 children.

<sup>30</sup> For this figure, the number of entries in the reception centers database over the 1986–2001 period is divided by the number of abductions registered by (1) UNICEF and (2) CPA. Those in unknown age and unknown year of abduction were included proportionate to cell size by year and age group. The result is expressed in %.

<sup>31</sup> Chris Dolan, “Which children count? The politics of children’s rights in northern Uganda,” in *Protracted Conflict, Elusive Peace: Initiatives to End the Violence in Northern Uganda*, edited by Okello Lucima, ACCORD, 2002.

In summary, the following information is available:

- From 1986–2001: 9,818 (UNICEF) to 15,723 (CPA) children were abducted
- From 2002–April 2006: 14,000 to 22,000 children were abducted (projection from reception center data)
- From 1986–2001: 14,984 (CPA) to 18,399 (UNICEF) adults were abducted
- From 2002–April 2006: 13,000 to 19,000 adults were abducted (projection from reception center data)

In total, we can therefore estimate the number of abductions over the 1986–2006 period at

- 24,000 to 38,000 children
- 28,000 to 37,000 adults
- Total of 52,000 to 75,000 abducted people

The whereabouts of 9,000 to 22,000 abducted children who are not registered at reception centers is unknown. However, it is likely that most have returned home without passing through a reception center, or passed through a reception center but either information was never recorded or records were lost. Some children still are with the LRA (possibly 1,000 to 3,000) and, according to the numerous accounts of children being killed for attempting to escape or other reasons while abducted, many may have died. Even fewer adults are accounted for, with fewer than 9,000 registered at reception centers. Again, most are likely to have come home without passing through a reception center, but the destiny of many is unknown. According to the community canvassing database from CPA, over the 1986–2001 period, roughly 37 percent of the abducted children and 27 percent of the abducted adults were unaccounted for. Furthermore, prevalence of abduction figures collected among the population<sup>32</sup> suggest that the number of abducted people is even higher. The estimates based on count information as outlined above therefore constitute a conservative measure of abduction among the population.

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<sup>32</sup> Phuong Pham, Patrick Vinck, Marieke Wierda, Eric Stover, and Adrian di Giovanni *supra* note 4; Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, and Roger Horton, *supra* note 11.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

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We offer the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. **Former LRA abductees can be distinguished by subgroup based on gender, length of abduction, experience, and exposure to violence.** Programs aimed at providing psychosocial assistance to former abductees and helping them reintegrate into their communities should be mindful of these characteristics. In general, more programs need to be developed to provide *all* children and youth in northern Uganda, including former abductees, with educational opportunities, vocational training, meaningful jobs, and leadership training.
  - **The majority of former abductees (61%) were 10 to 18 years old when they arrived at the reception centers.** The mean age of females was 16 years old (S.D. 7.0), and the median 15. The mean age of males was 20 years old (S.D. 8.6), and the median 17.
  - **Girls and women represent 24 percent of the former LRA abductees registered at the 8 reception centers included in the survey. Females stayed longer with the LRA than males. Young women between the ages of 19 and 30 tended to stay longer with the LRA, averaging 4.5 years.** Three factors may explain why women 19 to 30 years old stayed with the LRA for long periods of time. First, the LRA abducts girls and women to serve as long-term sexual partners and domestic servants to commanders. Fourteen percent of females who passed through a reception center in the district of Apac self-reported that they had been “given” to commanders and 10 percent reported giving birth while in captivity. Second, women forced to serve as “wives” are likely to be kept in encampments and villages located some distance from combat zones, offering less opportunity to escape, surrender, or to be captured by army troops. Finally, women who have babies while in captivity may fear trying to escape or simply chose not to leave the rebel group.
  - **LRA abductees have suffered a wide range of abuses during their captivity.** Information about these abuses is contained in data collected at three of the eight reception centers. At the same time, it must be recognized that many – if not most – of the young people and children of northern Uganda have been affected in some way by the violence in northern Uganda, including displacement, loss of family members, witnessing horrific events, and lack of access to health care, education, and other services.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, a disproportionate amount of attention has been paid to former LRA abductees in the form of media attention, “resettlement packages,” and direct cash aid to returnees and their families. This situation has caused resentment in some

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<sup>33</sup> Phuong Pham, Patrick Vinck, Marieke Wierda, Eric Stover, and Adrian di Giovanni, *Forgotten Voices: A Population-Based Study of Attitudes about Peace and Justice in Northern Uganda*, International Center for Transitional Justice and Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley, July 2005. See also Morten Boas and Anne Hatloy, Fafo, *The Northern Uganda IDP Profiling Study*, Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees of the Office of the Prime Minister and United Nations Development Programme, Vol. 1, September 2005.

communities<sup>34</sup> and diverted the focus away from the general situation of children and youth in northern Uganda. Rather than creating a set of general services for formerly abducted people (e.g. resettlement packages), emphasis should be placed on integrated, community-based programs that invest in youth and children in northern Uganda, including those who were never abducted. More programs need to be developed to provide children and youth with educational opportunities, vocational training, meaningful jobs, and leadership training.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, a targeted response should address specific needs of subgroups of abducted people, including reintegration and psychological support services.

2. ***Estimates of the number of LRA abductions are higher than previously suggested, and the whereabouts of most abducted people remains unknown.*** By triangulating data from different sources on the number of former abductees, we estimate that the LRA has abducted 24,000 to 38,000 children and 28,000 to 37,000 adults as of April 2006.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the whereabouts of most former LRA abductees remains largely unknown. Many former abductees have returned home without passing through a reception center, or passed through a reception center but information about their abduction was never recorded or later lost. While some abductees remain with the LRA, many have died on the battlefield or at the hands of the abductors. More work is needed to identify the number of people who have gone missing in northern Uganda and to investigate their whereabouts. Cross-cultural studies have shown that families wish to know the fate of their missing relatives and, if they have died, to receive their remains.<sup>37</sup>
  
3. ***Data collection and information management is critical to document population vulnerability and human rights violations and to inform policies.*** Our study found a significant disparity in the capacity of reception centers to collect, store, and analyze data on former LRA abductees. Reception centers recognized this shortcoming in 2005 and requested that this project be undertaken. A standardized system for collecting and analyzing data on former child soldiers needs to be created to assist the work of reception centers and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs worldwide. Such a system will be useful for several reasons. First, it will enable these institutions to record basic demographic and medical information about child soldiers, as well as qualitative information about their experiences in captivity. Second, having information in a standardized form will improve the ability of data managers to quickly retrieve and cross-reference information as they try to reunite former child soldiers with their parents and other relatives. Third, the analysis of aggregate data on child soldiers can reveal patterns of abduction and captivity that could be useful to prosecutors at the International Criminal Court and others investigating war crimes, including cases of forced conscription. Finally, a standardized database will help centers and DDR programs track former child soldiers who have returned to their families and provide follow-up services.

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<sup>34</sup> See also Erin Baines, Eric Stover, and Marieke Wierda, *War-Affected Children and Youth in Northern Uganda: Toward a Brighter Future, An Assessment Report*, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, May 2006, at 18-19.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> In our previous population-based study the scope and nature of abduction included persons who had been abducted for periods ranging from a few hours to several years (see note 4). Generally, former LRA abductees registered by the reception centers have been abducted for long periods of time.

<sup>37</sup> See Eric Stover and Rachel Shigekane, "Exhumation of Mass Graves: Balancing Legal and Humanitarian Needs" in Eric Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein (eds.), *My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), at 85-120.

- 4. *LRA abductions of children and adults increased during and after large military campaigns against the LRA rebels.*** The Ugandan military and police need to do more to protect civilian populations. Furthermore, better monitoring of trends on abduction in real time could act as an “early warning” system of LRA activity in a given area and signal the need for greater protection of the affected population. The international community should continue to develop programs to protect vulnerable populations in northern Uganda.
- 5. *LRA abductions are geographically more dispersed than previously reported. Abductions are also concentrated in specific locations.*** The vast majority of former abductees who have passed through the reception centers (89%) were from the districts of Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader. This finding suggests that aid organizations providing services to former abductees should broaden the geographical scope of their outreach and programmatic activities.
- 6. *The numbers of former abductees arriving at reception centers have declined since 2004.*** This may be due to a decrease in hostilities. However, any increase in fighting could result in a sudden surge of abductees arriving at the centers. Moreover, if a peace agreement is reached, it is almost certain that a number of children and youth will leave the LRA and begin arriving at the reception centers or go directly to their homes. These scenarios suggest that local governmental agencies and reception centers should be prepared to provide shelter, food, and other services in the event of a sudden influx of returnees. Additional services should be provided to other vulnerable groups in the community in order to avoid creating the perception of unequal support and thus increasing any rift between the returnees and their communities.
- 7. *More information is needed to better understand the scope and intensity of abduction in northern Uganda.*** This reports provides basic information based on registered formerly abducted people who passed through the reception centers. The proportion of abducted people who do not go to reception centers is not known and may vary geographically, and across age and gender. More work is needed to investigate exposure to violence in general and abduction specifically in northern Uganda.

## Annex 1: Center Information

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### CARITAS, GULU

**Established:** 1988

**Mission:** Works for peace and sustainable development for the Acholi people

**Activities:** Food security, infrastructure rehabilitation, HIV/AIDS support, social communication activities, women’s empowerment, vocational training

**Contact:** P.O. Box 389, Gulu

Tel: 0471 32370/ 077596413/ 077 983674/ 0471 32736  
[caritasg@africaonline.co.ug](mailto:caritasg@africaonline.co.ug)

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#### Caritas Gulu - Basic Statistics

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Number of Registered FAP	2,034
Period of registration	1/1988 – 7/2005
Gender:	
Male	1,414 (69.5%)
Female	620 (30.5%)
Age:	Min–Max: 1 – 82
Age Group:	
0 – 4	54 (2.7%)
5 – 9	41 (2.1%)
10 – 14	341 (17.3%)
15 – 18	611 (30.9%)
>18	928 (46.9%)
Average Length of Abduction	421 days
Number Born in Captivity	95
Number of Child Mothers	71

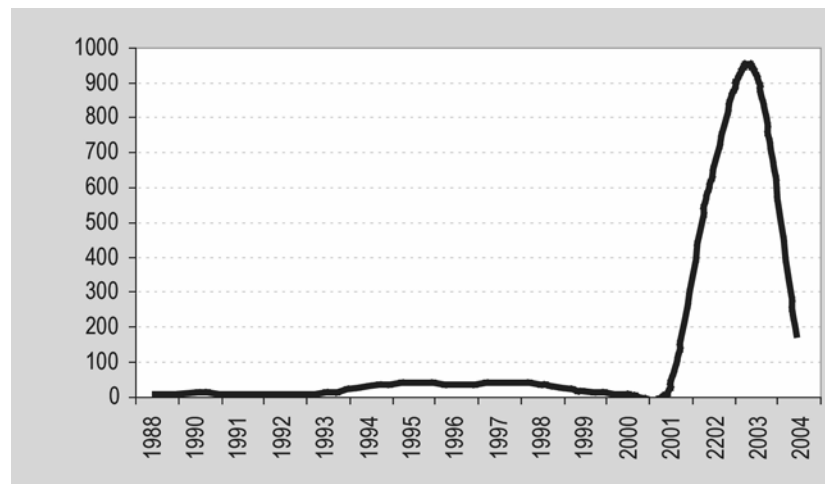
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Caritas is a relief and development agency affiliated with the Catholic Archdiocese of Gulu that aims to provide integral and sustainable development for the Acholi people in the region encompassed by the Gulu Archdiocese (including Gulu, Kitgum, Amuru, and Pader Districts). Caritas strives for peace and sustainable development through its work on food security projects, HIV/AIDS support programs, women’s empowerment programs, and provision of psychosocial support. One of Caritas’s biggest projects is food distribution, providing food, seeds, and agricultural equipment to thousands of families in Northern Uganda. Caritas, which means “charity” in Latin, works with all community members in need of these programs, but pays special attention to formerly abducted children. Specifically, Caritas’s main program activities are: 1) emergency relief delivery to war victims and other needy persons; 2) a psychosocial support program for war-affected persons through provision of material support, counseling services, medical care, and resettlement; 3) a food-production program with emphasis on leadership training, self-reliance, micro-finance management, and productive activities; 4) infrastructure rehabilitation with focus on community roads, bridges, and de-silting the dams; 5) civil peace-education and reconciliation processes based on human rights and the dignity of the human person; 6) vocational training targeting war victims and rural youth; 7) an HIV/AIDS

support program; 8) social communication activities; and 9) water and sanitation to internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

Caritas's intake database contains registration information for returnees whose year of abduction ranged from 1988 to 1995. This database contains 29 variable fields with information on demographics, dates of abduction/release/arrival and departure from the center, location of origin, and some follow-up information. In total it includes 2,048 cases, of which 14 cases were omitted from analysis due to duplicate entry. The average age of a returnee was 21 years, but ages ranged from 1 year to 82 years. As Figure 7 indicates, most of the returnees received at Caritas were abducted in 2003, with a peak in October of that year.

*Figure 7: Year of Abduction among Formerly Abducted Persons (FAP) at Caritas Gulu*



About 70 percent of the formerly abducted people who were registered at Caritas's Gulu headquarters office were male and the other 30 percent were female. The database also contains valuable information about birth rates among abductees while in captivity. About 5 percent of the returnees were born in captivity and 2 infants were delivered at the reception center. Additionally, about 7 percent of the female returnees reported that they gave birth to a child while they were in captivity. About 3 percent reported that they had received an Amnesty Certificate and Package. Only 1 percent of all returnees were followed-up on to determine their progress after they left the reception center.

**CARITAS, APAC**

**Established:** 2003–2005

**Mission:** Works for peace and sustainable development for the Acholi people

**Activities:** Reception center with some counseling

**Contact:** (see Caritas, Gulu)

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<b>Caritas Apac - Basic Statistics</b>		
Number of Registered FAP		192
Period of registration		06/2003 – 07/2005
Gender:	Male	114 (59.4%)
	Female	78 (40.6%)
Age:	Min–Max:	5 – 64
Age Group:	0 – 4	0 (0%)
	<i>n=159</i> 5 – 9	4 (2.5%)
	10 – 14	73 (45.9%)
	15 – 18	53 (33.3%)
	>18	29 (18.2%)
Average Length of Abduction		173 days
Number Born in Captivity		NA
Number of Child Mothers		8

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Caritas in Apac was opened in May 2003 and was closed in July 2005 due to lack of funding and a reduction in the number of children returning from captivity to this area. Working through the Catholic parish networks, the Caritas Apac branch was the first and only reception center established for formerly abducted people in the district. The reception center there provided counseling to formerly abducted children and their families upon reunification. Upon arrival, children were given a package containing a mattress, blanket, jerry can, and saucepan, which they were able to take with them when they left. They were also given some money for their transport home. The staff at Caritas Apac, which comprised three social workers, conducted follow-up visits with the children at one month, three months, and six months. Caritas is also one of the better known reception centers because of the documentary *The Lost Children*, based on four children who were at Caritas Reception Center in Pajule.

Caritas Apac's database consisted of 192 children who arrived at the center between June 2003 and July 2005. The database contained 84 fields with information on demographics, dates of abduction and release/escape, dates of arrival at the center, location of origin, as well as history of education, family, abduction, captivity, escape, and time at the center. Caritas's data was already entered into an Excel spreadsheet; our team helped them import it into SPSS to analyze the results and fixed some of their errors in data entry. The information contained in the database is summarized below.

Almost 60 percent of the abductees received at Caritas were male, and 71 percent (137) were originally from Apac. The majority of the others were from Gulu (9%) and Lira (14%). The earliest abduction recorded at Apac took place in October 1996 and the most recent case recorded was abducted October 10, 2005. The recorded dates of escape from captivity ranged



between December 2000 and October 2005. Returnees stayed at the reception center as little as two days but some stayed for up to a year.

Caritas asked returnees about their experiences when they were initially abducted and their exposure to traumatic experiences during their time in captivity. At the time of abduction, almost 80 percent were forced to carry a load, 67 percent were beaten, and 58 percent were tied up. About one-third (31%) were with their family at the time of the abduction, 21 percent were abducted with brothers, and 11 percent were abducted with sisters. More than half (52%) of the abductions occurred during the night, 21 percent occurred during the evening, 19 percent occurred during the day, and 8 percent in the morning. In addition, four out of five returnees (80%) were enrolled in school prior to abduction: 72 percent were enrolled in primary school, 6 percent were in secondary school, and 2 percent were in tertiary school. This is consistent with school enrollment rates found in the camps.<sup>38</sup> While in captivity, most witnessed or participated in violence (some were forced to perpetrate violence, while others were on the receiving end). Almost two-thirds (65%) were beaten or tortured, 15 percent participated in killing, 31 percent witnessed another captive participate in killing, and 49 percent witnessed the killing of another captive. Returnees identified failing to walk or walking too slowly and attempted escape as the two main reasons captives were killed, beaten, and/or tortured by LRA. Among the 78 females, 14 percent were given to commanders and 10 percent gave birth while in captivity.

<b>Experience of Violence At Time of Abduction</b>		<b>Experience of Violence While with the LRA</b>	
Beaten at abduction	128 (67%)	Was forced to walk far	152 (79%)
Tied up at abduction	112 (58%)	Witnessed killing of abductee	94 (49%)
Given load to carry at abduction	151 (79%)	Participated in killing	28 (15%)
Brother was also abducted	41 (21%)	Saw FAP participate in killing	59 (31%)
Sister was also abducted	21 (11%)	Was beaten or tortured	124 (65%)
With family at time of abduction	62 (31%)	Received military training	33 (17%)
<b>Time / Condition of Escape</b>		Fought/Ambushed UPDF	11 (6%)
Escaped during fight/ambush	54 (28%)	Attacked by UPDF	81 (42%)
Escaped while walking	25 (13%)	Injured during attack	12 (6%)
Escaped during the night	26 (14%)	Experienced hunger or thirst	109 (66%)
Escaped at dawn	11 (6%)	Has been to Sudan	15 (8%)
Escaped during daytime	8 (4%)	Fought in Sudan	11 (6%)
Other	13 (7%)	Was given to commanders*	11 (14%)*
Unknown	55 (29%)	Had child during captivity*	8 (10%)*

\* Among female only

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<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Education Statistics and SWAY Report, September 2006

<b>Time of Day Abduction Occurred (n=171)</b>	
Morning	13 (8%)
Day	33 (19%)
Evening	36 (21%)
Night	89 (52%)

<b>Main Reason for Torturing or Beating Abductee</b> (reported by abductee, n = 83)	
Failing to walk/Walk slowly	37 (45%)
Escape	12 (14%)
Did not follow order	8 (10%)
No reason	4 (5%)
Failing to carry load	2 (2%)
Stealing/Money	4 (5%)
Registration	2 (2%)
Other	14 (17%)

<b>Main Reason for Killing Abductee</b> (reported by abductee, n = 58)	
Could not walk/Walk slowly	16 (28%)
Escape/Attempted escape	20 (34%)
No reason/To prove a point	6 (10%)
UPDF/Soldiers	2 (3%)
Failing to carry load	2 (3%)
Weak	2 (3%)
Do not know	4 (7%)
Other	6 (10%)

**CONCERNED PARENTS ASSOCIATION, KITGUM**

**Established:** 2001

**Mission:** Advocates for peace and social stability for children affected by the war in Northern Uganda through advocacy and psychosocial support

**Activities:** Psychosocial support and reintegration, education, health, peace building, economic empowerment, and HIV/AIDS prevention related activities

**Contact:** P.O. Box 219, Kitgum [www.cpauganda.org](http://www.cpauganda.org)

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**CPA Kitgum - Basic Statistics**

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Number of Registered FAPs	1,745
Period of registration	01/2002 – 03/2006
Gender:	
Male	1,417 (81.2%)
Female	327 (18.7%)
Age:	Min–Max: 1 – 79
Age Group:	0 – 4 4 (0.2%)
<i>n=1,730</i>	5 – 9 1 (0.1%)
	10 – 14 4 (0.2%)
	15 – 18 418 (24.2%)
	>18 1,303 (75.3%)
Average Length of Abduction	215 days
Number Born in Captivity	3
Number of Child Mothers	0

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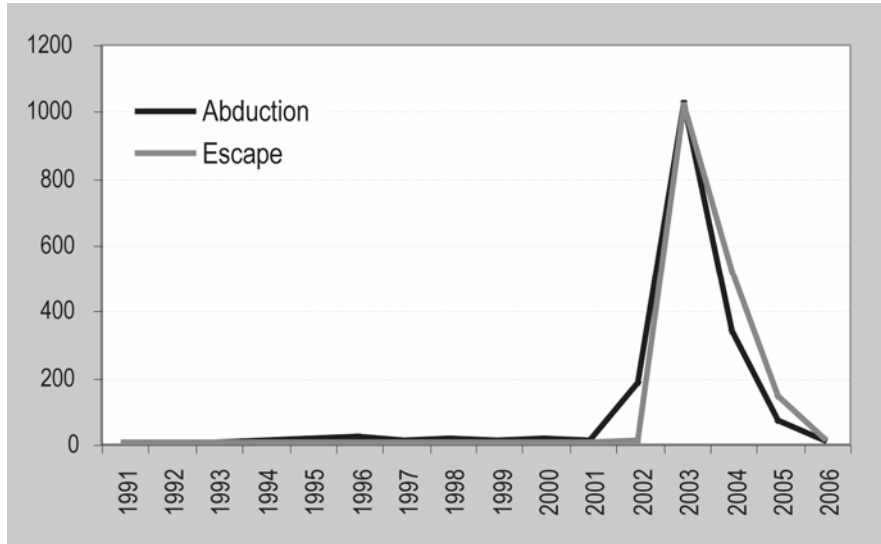
Concerned Parents Association (CPA) of Kitgum was established in 2001 as a branch of CPA-Uganda (formed in 1996). CPA is a child-focused organization dedicated to promoting peace and social stability for war-affected children through the use of advocacy and psychosocial support. There are two parts to this program: the reception center and the night-commuter project. The underlying assumption at CPA is that true repatriation into society can only take place at home. The prime stated objectives of CPA are to: 1) advocate for the release of all abducted children as well as stop future abductions, 2) rehabilitate and reintegrate returnees, and 3) build a sustainable peace in Uganda. The CPA's long-term goal is to rededicate itself as an organization that addresses the root problems and provides community care, instead of only treating the symptoms of the problem. According to the director of CPA, once a formerly abducted child is ready to be reunited with his or her family, the child is provided with a returnee kit containing clothes, a blanket, soap, and rehydration salts.

To achieve these goals, CPA employs activities that promote advocacy and awareness of the problem; networking and collaborative efforts among institutions; psychosocial support for war-affected families; community reconciliation and peace building; capacity building and institutional development; and documentation, research, monitoring, and evaluation. As part of this last activity, on January 1, 2002, CPA started collecting information on returnees registered at the center. By March 2006, they had recorded data on a total of 1,745 returnees. The database has 13 fields with information on demographics, dates of abduction and release or escape, dates of arrival and departure from the center, and the location of origin. For every four males, one female was received at the reception center. This center caters specifically to returnees over the age of 18. Over 75% of the returnees at CPA Kitgum are adults over the age of 18 and the mean

age of entrants was 26 years. This contradicts the popular assumption that most of those received at the reception center are adolescents. CPA Kitgum did not have any females identified as child mothers but they did record three returnees born in captivity.

The average time abductees spent in captivity was 215 days; however, the total time varies widely from a few hours to 12 years. As the following figure illustrates, the majority of abductions and returns among those registered at the reception center took place from 2002 to 2005.

*Figure 8: Abduction and Escape Registered at CPA Gulu*



**CONCERNED PARENTS ASSOCIATION, LIRA**

**Established:** 2001–2003

**Mission:** Advocates for abducted people, formerly abducted children, peace and social stability in Northern Uganda

**Activities:** Reception center; follow-up support groups for returnees, their families and the community; and a school support program

**Contact:** P.O. Box 815, Lira    Tel: 256-473-20650    [www.cpauganda.org](http://www.cpauganda.org)

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**CPA Lira - Basic Statistics**

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Number of Registered FAP	318
Period of registration	1/2001 – 10/2003
Gender:	
Male	254 (79.9%)
Female	62 (19.5%)
Age:	Min–Max: 0 – 55
Age Group:	
0 – 4	18 (5.7%)
5 – 9	7 (2.2%)
10 – 14	95 (29.9%)
15 – 18	111 (34.9%)
>18	87 (27.4%)
Average Length of Abduction	148 days
Number Born in Captivity	NA
Number of Child Mothers	NA

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Concerned Parents Association (CPA) in Lira operated for less than three years, from January 2001 to October 2003. It was then replaced by the Rachele Center in Lira. It functioned as a reception center with some follow-up in Lira town only. The center also conducted parent support groups, which still maintain a presence in the town. CPA maintains ongoing programs in Lira which include a school support program that provides school fees, emergency support for war victims, a parent support group and community-based psychosocial support.

In total, CPA Lira served 318 returnees. During the first year of operation, CPA only collected limited information in about 13 fields including demographics and dates of abduction, release/escape, arrival at the center, and departure from the center. During the second year, they started to expand their data collection to include health and socioeconomic information. Therefore, only 151 cases had complete information.

Similar to the CPA reception center in Kitgum, 80 percent of the returnees in Lira were male and 20 percent were female. However, a little more than one-quarter (27%) were adults over the age of 18 (in contrast to CPA Kitgum, where 75% of the returnees were adults). About 35 percent were between the ages of 15 and 18 years and 30 percent were between the ages of 10 and 14 years. They did not collect any information on child mothers or children born in captivity. However, on average, the returnees at CPA Lira spent 148 days in captivity with the LRA. About 47 percent of the returnees were missing a father and 22 percent were missing a mother; almost one-fifth had lost both parents.

## **Abducted: The Lord's Resistance Army and Forced Conscription in Northern Uganda**

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The following results were limited to the 151 cases where more detailed information was collected. The majority of returnees received at CPA Lira came from the army barracks (80%). They also received cases from other reception centers such as World Vision and the local community. Over 65 percent of the returnees were Lango and 32 percent were Acholi. Over 60 percent of the returnees were Catholic; almost all of the rest were Protestants (30%) or Pentecostals (10%). Returnees had an average of 7 family members in their immediate family and one dependent child. Only 11 percent of returnees had received an amnesty certificate.

CPA Lira also documented information about returnees' education prior to abduction. About 60 percent were enrolled in school right before their abduction, predominantly at the primary level.

Psychosocial assessment of the 151 cases revealed that 55.6 percent experienced flashbacks of their experiences during their abduction, 22 percent experienced nightmares, 8 percent experienced multiple symptoms (i.e. flashbacks, nightmares, sadness, sleeplessness, and withdrawal), 3 percent had difficulty sleeping, and 3 percent experienced sadness. Although such assessment criteria do not constitute a clinical diagnosis, they are provided here as indicative values.

<b>Psychosocial Status</b>		<b>Psychosocial Assessment Results</b>	
Bad	10 (7%)	Flashbacks	84 (56%)
Fair	103 (68%)	Nightmares	33(22%)
Good	35 (23%)	Sadness	4 (3%)
Missing	3 (2%)	Sleepless	5 (3%)
		Withdrawal	2 (1%)
		All	13 (9%)
		None	8 (5%)

**GULU SUPPORT THE CHILDREN ORGANIZATION (GUSCO), GULU**

**Established:** 1994

**Mission:** Advocates for children, encourages rehabilitation as a holistic process, and promotes the well-being of war-affected children through psychosocial support, peace building, advocacy and capacity building

**Activities:** Reception center, basic training courses for children, counseling with community members, micro-finance programs, and support groups

**Contact:** P.O. Box 405, Gulu Tel: 256 (0) 471-32049 [www.gusco.org](http://www.gusco.org)

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**GUSCO Gulu - Basic Statistics**

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Number of Registered FAP	3,118
Period of registration	6/2001 – 12/2005
Gender:	Male 1,953 (63.1%)
<i>n=3,097</i>	Female 1,144 (36.9%)
Age:	Min–Max: 0 – 50
Age Group:	0 – 4 261 (8.5%)
<i>n=3,068</i>	5 – 9 120 (3.9%)
	10 – 14 1,154 (37.6%)
	15 – 18 1,218 (39.7%)
	>18 315 (10.3%)
Average Length of Abduction	435 days
Number Born in Captivity	103
Number of Child Mothers	73

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Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO) was established in 1994 by a group of concerned parents and other local residents. Although it has received formerly abducted children since 1994, the reception center officially opened in 1997. GUSCO's vision is inclusive and against institutionalism; they are advocates for children and approach rehabilitation holistically, even encouraging traditional cleansing ceremonies. The staff provides basic training for the children: tailoring for girls and bicycle repair, carpentry, and bricklaying for boys. In addition to follow-up with the children at schools and in the camps, the staff works with the community to sensitize members on issues related to reintegrating these children. GUSCO also runs a micro-finance program to help child mothers, parent support groups, and orphans. Besides running the reception center, GUSCO also engages in community-based activities, which include education and training programs and advocacy and research activities. GUSCO reception center has a capacity of 50 children. There are 10 social workers, 2 nurses, 2 matrons, 2 class therapy teachers, 4 caretakers, and 2 storekeepers providing care to the children.

Since 1994, GUSCO has received over 7,500 returnees at their reception center. Collection of information on returnees started in 2001. Earlier data are either unavailable or have been misplaced. GUSCO currently maintains four sets of data at the reception center: 1) intake registration of formerly abducted people, 2) reintegration of data, 3) community follow-up of returnees who have been reunited with their families, and 4) a visitors database. The data from the first three databases are presented here.

### **Gusco Intake Registration Database**

Since 2001, 3,118 returnees have been registered in the GUSCO database. Among these, 63 percent were male and 37 percent were female. There were 73 (2%) child mothers, 103 (3%) children born in captivity, and another 43 (1%) children born in captivity but separated from their birth mother. Less than 1 percent of returnees who arrived at GUSCO were considered “disabled.” The length of time in captivity is unknown for one-quarter of the returnees at GUSCO. Fourteen percent of the returnees were abducted for less than one week, and about another 12 percent were held in captivity for up to one month. A little more than one-third were held in captivity for period of time ranging between one month and one year, and 16 percent were held for more than one year. The majority (69%) reported that both of their parents were alive. Four percent reported that their mother was dead, and 17 percent reported that their father was dead. Sixteen percent did not know the status of their parents.

<b>Parental Status</b>	
Both Alive	1,819 (59%)
Single Father	134 (4%)
Single Mother	525 (17%)
Double Orphan	160 (5%)
Unknown	9 (1%)
Missing	471 (15%)

### **GUSCO Reintegration Database**

Collection of data on reintegration started in 2005, with a total of 245 returnees interviewed. On average, returnees had spent 4 months at the reception center before being reunited with their family. The mean age of the reunited returnees was 11, with 85 percent being 18 or younger. Although a majority of abductees received at the reception center were male, more than half (53%) of the cases in the reintegration database were female. Most of the reintegrated returnees were from Gulu (75%), 7 percent were from Kitgum, and 5 percent were from Apac. About one-third of the children were suffering from an illness at the time of reunion but almost everyone (95%) was determined to be mentally stable. About 28 percent of these reintegrated abductees were born in captivity, 14 percent were considered child mothers, and 9 percent were unaccompanied children. Nearly half (48%) had two living parents, one-third (34%) had one parent who was dead, and 8 percent had no living parent. During the reunion, nearly all (92%) of the parents had a positive reaction to the abductee’s homecoming. Despite the interruption in their schooling, the reintegrated returnees still have high aspirations. About 61 percent intended to go back to school, 4 percent want to attend vocational school, and 12 percent want to start a private business. Those who wanted a formal education aspired to be nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers, lawyers, pilots and engineers.



### **GUSCO Community Follow-up**

GUSCO began collecting follow-up information in 2005 for the 297 returnees living in Gulu district. About one third (37%) had been back in their community for less than one year, 29 percent had been back between 1 and 2 years, and another 31 percent had been back for more than two years. The age of these returnees ranged between 1 and 32 years, with 14 years being the average. About 35 percent were female and 65 percent were male. The majority seemed to be doing well during the follow-up visit. While 7 percent of the returnees were not engaged in any sort of activity, a majority were enrolled in school (80%) or vocational training (3%). Most of those enrolled attended primary school (95%) and only 5 percent received poor grades attributed to distance from the school, psychological problems, shyness, heading a household, and stigmatization. Attendance was relatively good for three-quarters of the returnees interviewed and most were engaged in extra-curricular activities including sport (73%), dance, music, or theater (12%). About 5 percent reported violent incidents following reintegration.

**KITGUM CONCERNED WOMEN ASSOCIATION (KICWA), KITGUM**

**Established:** 1998

**Mission:** To support the rights and reintegration of war-affected children through psychosocial support, advocacy, reconciliation, and building their productive capacity for sustainable development of the Acholi subregion

**Activities:** First-aid services, hospital and training referrals, follow-up, psychosocial support and advocacy

**Contact:** P.O. Box 282, Kitgum      Tel: 256 (0) 77-857153      [www.gusco.org](http://www.gusco.org)

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**KICWA - Basic Statistics**

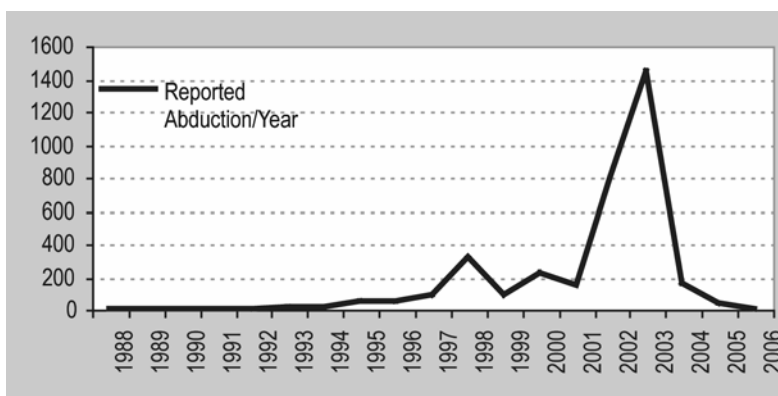
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Number of Registered FAP	4,205
Period of registration	2/1998 – 2/2006
Gender:	Male 2,944 (70%)
	Female 1,261 (30%)
Age:	Min–Max: 1 – 54
Age Group:	0 – 4 98 (2.6%)
<i>n=3,710</i>	5 – 9 37 (1.0%)
	10 – 14 1,563 (42.1%)
	15 – 18 1,501 (40.5%)
	>18 511 (13.8%)
Average Length of Abduction	333 days
Number Born in Captivity	200
Number of Child Mothers	253

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Kitgum Concerned Women's Association (KICWA) was founded in 1998 by a group of women concerned about the plight of children. Supported by the local government in Kitgum and using their own resources, they operate a reception center where they provide food and medical care to young people who have recently returned from rebel captivity. KICWA is a transition organization but not the primary provider of skills training or reintegration, although they do provide psychological care for children suffering from trauma and, since 2005, have initiated some follow-up activities. In 1998, KICWA entered into a partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and started the construction of a reception center in traditional Acholi style to mimic the children's homes and communities.

Although KICWA focuses on female abductees and their children, they have welcomed people of both sexes and all ages. Between 1998 and 2006, a total of 4,205 abductees were received at KICWA, of these 2,944 (70%) were male and 1,261 (30%) were female. There were 253 child mothers and 200 children born in or after captivity. Reception of abductees soared (and peaked) in 2003 with 1,467 received that year. Many (990) were also received in 2004. Since then, reception has dropped, and only 138 abductees were recorded entering the reception center in 2006. Returnees predominantly reported dates of abduction in 2002 (24%) and 2003 (42%).



In 2005, KICWA started to follow up on children who had been reunited with their families after spending time at KICWA reception center (92%) or other reception centers (8%). KICWA collected detailed follow-up information on 342 returnees. About 66 percent had at least one follow-up visit, 26 percent had two follow-up visits, and 7 percent had three follow-up visits. About 15 percent of these returnees were orphans, 7 percent were considered child mothers, 1 percent were born in captivity, and 1 percent were disabled or seriously ill. Slightly more than half of the follow-up returnees (51%) had some sort of ritual performed upon reuniting with their family and the community. The majority of these rituals were traditional Acholi ways of reconciliation and forgiveness. Among those who had rituals performed, about half (48%) participated in rituals that involved stepping on an egg only; 4 percent participated in rituals that involved stepping on an egg and sprinkling water; and 3 percent participated in rituals that involved stepping on an egg and slaughtering a goat. About 4 percent participated in rituals that only involved slaughtering a goat and 1 percent participated in rituals that involved slaughtering a hen. About 10 percent only prayed.

About 70 percent of the followed-up returnees attended school, 6 percent were receiving vocational or business training, and 6 percent were engaged in some form of economic activity. Most of the returnees had a good relationship with their parents or guardians (87%), school (80%), and community (66%). When the parents of the returnees were asked their thoughts regarding their child, all but 27 parents had very positive comments, including statements describing their child as disciplined, nice, respectful, polite, and hard-working. Many also said they were just happy to have their child home. The 27 parents who had negative comments made statements describing their child as demanding, arrogant, stubborn, a trouble maker, and/or aggressive. When the social workers asked the child about their parents, most of the children also had very positive comments, stating their parents were caring, loving, and supportive and that they were happy to be home and back in school. Fifty-seven children had negative comments; some negative comments voiced by the children were that they felt neglected, their father was drinking too much, life was hard, their grandparents or parents mistreated them, their parents were not understanding and/or did not provide them with what they need. When community members were asked about their views regarding having the returnee back in the community, almost everyone had positive feedback. Only 22 individuals (7%) had negative assessments, stating either that they were envious or they thought the child had killed too much.

**CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING FELLOWSHIP (CCF), PADER**

**Established:** 2003

**Mission:** Provides reception, counseling and support for formerly abducted children, war-affected children and child mothers

**Vision:** Communities where children, especially vulnerable children, are free from all forms of discrimination or stigmatization and enjoy their human rights and dignity.

**Activities:** Reception and reintegration, life-skills classes, psychosocial support, training

**Contact:** Pader Town, Private Bag Pader

Tel: 077551430; hcccmothers@mail.com

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**CCF – Basic Statistics**

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Number of Registered FAP	1,016
Period of registration	1/2004 – 2/2006
Gender:	Male 392 (54.4%)
<i>n=720</i>	Female 328 (45.6%)
Age:	Min–Max: 0 – 50
Age Group:	0 – 4 50 (7.2%)
<i>n=698</i>	5 – 9 12 (1.7%)
	10 – 14 284 (40.7%)
	15 – 18 232 (33.2%)
	>18 120 (17.2%)
Average Length of Abduction	671 days
Number Born in Captivity	15
Number of Child Mothers	13

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Christian Counseling Fellowship (CCF) in Pader opened in 2003 in the home of Alice Acan and is a community-based organization operating in Pader District. The organization's mission is to address the plight of child mothers, their children, and other vulnerable children in Pader district affected by armed conflict. CCF offers limited health services and skills-training programs; the emphasis is on hosting the children. The social workers go out in the field when possible, but do not engage in systematic follow-up visits. They also have an educational program in the camps that focuses on life skills, safe sex, and peer support for child mothers. CCF also acquired a plot of land to be used for the construction of a comprehensive secondary and vocational school.

The CCF database contains registration information for returnees received at the reception center between January 2004 and March 2006. During this period, 1,016 returnees were received by CCF. Their ages ranged from 1 year to 67 years with the average age being 15. The majority of those received at the center (54%) are female. The database lists 13 child mothers and 15 children who were born during their mother's captivity with the rebel group. About 2 percent of the returnees received at the reception center have at least one child. About 70 percent are from Pader and 11 percent are from Kitgum. Returnees who arrived at CCF were in captivity from as little as one day to as long as 10 years, with the mean length of time in captivity being nearly two years. Once they arrived at CCF, returnees stayed for an average of three months.

**WORLD VISION, GULU**

**Established:** 1995

**Mission:** Christian relief and development organization helping children and their families reach their full potential by restoring hope to formerly abducted children through rehabilitation, resettlement, and reintegration

**Activities:** Provide support and counseling for formerly abducted children and their family members; vocational skills training program; outreach program

**Contact:** P. O. Box 5319, Gulu  
Tel: 256-772613921/ 047132114

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**World Vision Gulu - Basic Statistics**

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Number of Registered FAP	10,883
Period of registration	6/1995 – 4/2006
Gender:	
Male	9,032 (83.0%)
Female	1,842 (16.9%)
Age:	Min–Max: 1 – 80
Age Group:	0 – 4 184 (1.7%)
<i>n=10,748</i>	5 – 9 84 (0.8%)
	10 – 14 2,254 (21.0%)
	15 – 18 3,216 (29.9%)
	>18 5,010 (46.6%)
Average Length of Abduction	336 days
Number Born in Captivity	157
Number of Child Mothers	0

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World Vision in Gulu founded three separate reception centers for children, adults, and child mothers in March 1995 and has received the most returnees at these three reception centers. The centers are a part of the international Christian NGO's broader Ugandan program. World Vision's primary focus is on rehabilitation to facilitate reintegration into the community. The returnees are questioned about their personal and family information upon arrival, and their information and stories are documented by the reception center to help track down their families. The returnees' level of trauma is also immediately assessed to determine what kind of counseling is most appropriate. Additionally, the on-site nurse arranges for each new arrival to have a full physical check-up at a hospital or health facility nearby. Those experiencing more serious health complications are given referrals for professional treatment elsewhere, if necessary.

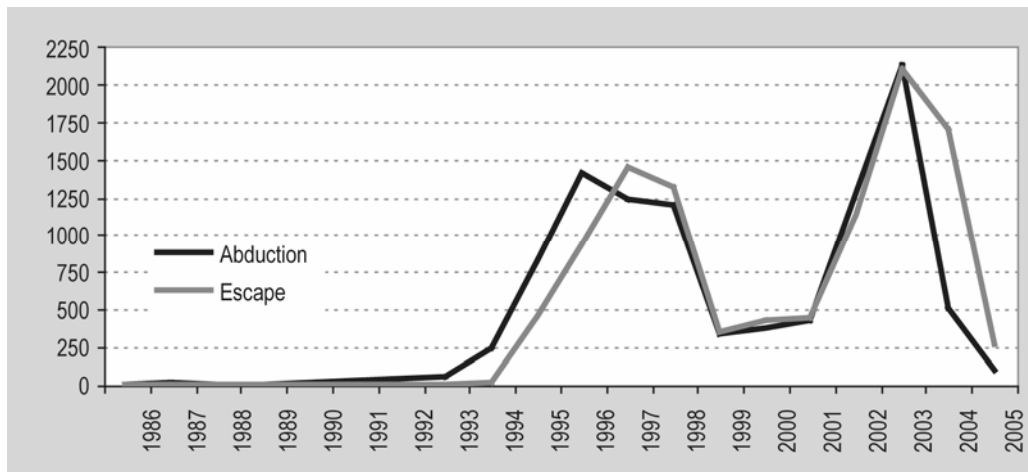
Rehabilitation is the primary goal of the World Vision reception centers. A psychosocial therapeutic approach is followed in hopes of achieving this goal. Returnees, particularly children, participate in group and individual counseling, where they are encouraged to talk openly about their experiences. Drawing is also used to help children, particularly those who are less talkative, express their fears and memories. In addition to the support and counseling provided to returnees before reunions with their family members, the center also provides vocational skills training (carpentry and bricklaying for boys, tailoring and hair-styling for girls) and gives the returnees responsibilities, such as cooking or cleaning. These skills and responsibilities help returnees

## Abducted: The Lord's Resistance Army and Forced Conscription in Northern Uganda

transition more easily into being contributing members of their communities. Staff members also visit camps to counsel the family members before they are reunited with the abductees; these visits acknowledge, and are intended to mitigate, the trauma and difficulties experienced by both the family and returnee during the reunification process.

Since 1995, World Vision has served over 10,883 returnees at their Gulu center alone. Almost half the returnees (47%) served at World Vision are over the age of 18 years. The people who have been rehabilitated range in age from one year up to 80 years. As at many of the other reception centers, the majority of returnees received at World Vision were male; 83 percent were male and only 17 percent were female, a ration of 4:1. They did not document child mothers in their database but listed 157 children identified as being born during their mother's captivity with the LRA.

The following illustrates the returnee-reported timeline from date of abduction to date of escape. Based on this chart, there were two periods of intense abduction events, between 1996 and 1998, and then again from June 2003 to December 2004.



**RACHELE RECEPTION CENTER, LIRA**

The Database Project research team was not granted access to the data on returnees collected at Rachele reception center. The information presented here was provided by Rachele as aggregated (processed) figures. Only demographic data are available, although extensive information is collected upon returnee arrival.

**Established:** 2003

**Mission:** Reintegration of formerly abducted children into communities

**Activities:** Provide school fees; support groups for children, families and community members; psychosocial counseling training for teachers

**Contact:** Plots 11/13 Omodo Anyuru Road (East of Railway Primary School), Lira

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**Rachele - Basic Statistics**

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Number of Registered FAP	2,479
Period of registration	2003–2006
Gender:	
Male	1,559 (62.9%)
Female	920 (37.1%)
Age:	Min–Max: -
Age Group:	
0 – 4	196 (7.9%)
5 – 9	85 (3.4%)
10 – 14	1,178 (47.7%)
15 – 18	842 (34.1%)
>18	171 (6.9%)
Average Length of Abduction	-
Number Born in Captivity	211
Number of Child Mothers	152

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In October 2003 the Belgian Foreign Affairs Office funded the creation of the Rachele Reception Center, named after Sister Rachele, headmistress of a school where 139 girls were abducted by rebels in 1996; she followed the rebels and ultimately managed to get back 109 of the students. The center aims to help returnees overcome the trauma they have experienced while in captivity so they may successfully reintegrate into their communities. Upon arrival, returnees are given food, medical care, and a resettlement kit with clothes, bedding, sandals, and toiletries. The arriving returnees burn their old clothes, symbolically leaving behind their life in captivity to start anew. This signifies the beginning of their rehabilitation at the center, where they also participate in group and individual counseling, and use drawing, acting, music, and dance to deal with their experiences. In addition to dealing with returnees' psychological health, the center also helps them develop the practical skills and knowledge necessary to transition smoothly back into their communities. Children have classes in reading, writing, math, health, debate, and vocational training to catch up on what they may have missed while in captivity. Catch-up classes based on Ugandan curriculum and schoolbooks are taught three times a week. Children are divided into two groups, lower primary classes (P1- P4) and upper primary classes (P5 and above); those completely illiterate are offered basic writing and reading classes. The center has four dormitories, offices for psychosocial support, a conference room, a dining hall, a recreation hall, a kitchen, sports fields, sanitation facilities, a dispensary, a matron's room, and a sick bay.

From 2003 to March 2006, Rachele received 2,479 returnees, close to half of whom were between the ages of 10 and 14 years, and another one-third were between the ages of 15 and 18 years old. About 7% were adults over the age of 18 years. Among the abductees returning during this period, 152 (6%) were considered child mothers and 211 (9%) were children born in captivity. Between October 2004 and September 2005, over 1,300 children attended classes at Rachele (750 in lower primary and 550 in upper primary), including child mothers who were allowed to bring their babies. Vocational training was also provided to 180 girls in tailoring and to 26 girls in hairdressing

Between October of 2004 and October 2005, 1,200 parents visited the center searching for missing children. When a child was found, family visits were arranged before complete reunification for children who feared returning to their villages; children who had been forced by their captors to commit violence and/or killings were particularly hesitant to return home. Between September 2004 and September 2005, 129 such visits were conducted. During the same period, 653 children were reunited, including 365 males (56%) and 288 (44%) females. Additionally, 64 returnees were referred to other centers in their district of origin. Around 70 children were referred to the Rachele Center for reunion only and were therefore not included in the intake list; these children stayed for a short time (from a few hours up to a few days) at Rachele before being collected by relatives.

Rachele Center conducted follow-up visits to 3,413 returnees, regardless of the reception center they passed through. About half the follow-up visits were conducted in the community while the other half were conducted at the school. Data on the follow-up visits are not available, but information on small groups of returnees in Gulu (41) and Lira (23) suggest that returnees were generally well received and suffered little physical and psychological problems but faced extreme poverty. In the course of these follow-ups, 839 returnees in Lira, Apac, and Pader were given items to aid in income-generating activities.

In July 2006, Rachele Center opened a comprehensive secondary school, a move that will accelerate the transition from reception to training activities.



## Annex 2: Community Canvassing Database

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Community-based registration of abducted people:

<b>Community Canvassing Basic Statistics</b>		
Number of Abductions Registered		35,644
Period of Registration		Up to October 2005
Gender:	Male	22.6%
	Female	77.3%
Age	Mean (S.D.)	23.0 (12.50)
Age Group:	0 – 4	1.0%
	5 – 9	2.5%
	10 – 14	21.5%
	15 – 18	25.8%
	>18	49.0%

## **Annex 3: Authors and Acknowledgements**

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### **THE AUTHORS**

This report was written by Phuong Pham, Patrick Vinck, and Eric Stover.

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