

Fulfilling the Forgotten Promise:

**The Protection of Civilians in
Northern Uganda**

A study of protection of civilians sponsored
by members of InterAction's Protection working group

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This report was produced by members of InterAction's Protection Working Group, whose aim is to enhance the capacity of humanitarian actors in the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and civilians affected by conflict.

InterAction is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations. With 160 members operating in every developing country, InterAction works to overcome poverty, exclusion, and suffering by advancing social justice and basic dignity for all.

Eamonn Casey, editor

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Acronyms and other terms

CSOPNU	Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda
CVCs	Community Volunteer Centers
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations
FACs	Formerly abducted children
GBV	Gender-based violence
GoU	Government of Uganda
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee – a broad forum of high-level representatives from UN and non-UN humanitarian agencies
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
IHL	International humanitarian law
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LCs	Local councils/councillors
LDU	Local Defense Units – militias supporting the Ugandan army
LEMU	The Land and Equity Movement in Uganda
LRA	Lord’s Resistance Army – an insurgent group that has terrorised the population of Northern Uganda for the past 20 years
MISP	Minimum Initial Services Package of reproductive health services
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontières
NGOs	Nongovernmental organisations
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
ORCs	Open Relief Centres
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PWGs	Protection Working Groups
RDCs	Resident District Commissioners
ROEs	Rules of Engagement (on dealing with the military on armed escorts for humanitarian convoys, for instance)
Sphere	A set of standards agreed by humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross movement for natural disaster response
STIs	Sexually-transmitted infections
TBA	Traditional birth attendant
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSECORD	United Nations Security Coordination service
UPDF	Uganda People’s Defence Forces: the Ugandan army
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme of the United Nations
WHO	World Health Organisation of the United Nations

Executive Summary

Northern Uganda has the fourth largest displaced population in the world (between 1.9 and 2 million people) and is the scene of a horrific war where children are the primary targets of an insurgent group called the Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA.¹

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland has described the protracted conflict in Northern Uganda as “the world's worst forgotten emergency”.

Despite the length of the crisis and the brutality demonstrated against the population, including women and children, the war in Northern Uganda and associated humanitarian crisis rarely make the news at a global level.

An estimated 29,000 children, some of them eight years old or younger, have been abducted from their families during brutal surprise attacks by the LRA, led by Joseph Kony.² Boys have been forced into becoming LRA fighters, coerced into attacking villages – often in their own communities - and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Girls have been turned over to LRA commanders as so-called “wives” - in reality sex slaves, forced to endure sexual relations, and often bear children, against their will.

The LRA uses other brutal tactics to terrify the population, though its insurgency is ostensibly against the Ugandan government, including murder, torture, terror and the mutilation of civilians, mostly women, by cutting off their lips, ears, breasts and hands.³

Despite Jan Egeland's recent efforts to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Northern Uganda, the United Nations itself bears a great deal of responsibility for forgetting the people of Northern Uganda. Although the UN Country Team in Uganda has undertaken critical new initiatives in protection over the past two years, the UN (with the exception of WFP) has been “missing in action” for most of the conflict, and UN activities are just beginning to take shape on the ground.

NGOs have been working in Northern Uganda throughout the 19-year crisis, but have also been unable, until recently, to bring a clear focus to their own critical role in protection.

Given the Security Council focus in recent years on the protection of children in armed conflict, the situation in Northern Uganda should be a top priority but the

¹ Source: UNICEF, June 2005. Although many agencies use the figure of 1.4-1.6 million displaced persons, that number is based on WFP food distribution, which does not cover many IDPs who do not receive food distribution. See: <http://www.db.idpproject.org/> under Population Figures and Profile, Global Figures.

² Source for figure of 30,000 children: UNICEF, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/KHII-6BF35W?OpenDocument>

³ See the following link to Uganda information on the Global IDP Project website: <http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/IdpProjectDb/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/68C89F636FE04028C125704600276AFD>. The source of the dates used is Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 9 June 2005, UGANDA: A Chronology of Events.

conflict has received far too little attention and the response to the protection needs of civilians has been wholly inadequate.

This paper describes many of the ways in which NGOs can contribute to the promotion and protection of the rights of vulnerable populations in Northern Uganda, outlining ways in which they can work – individually and together - towards the development of coordinated, strategic approaches to protection problems.

The actions identified as most critical to IDP protection include:

- Serious and expedited measures to achieve a negotiated peace settlement between the LRA and the Ugandan government
- Steps that must be taken by the Ugandan government and its military at national level and on the ground in Northern Uganda, including strict and widely publicised orders from President Yoweri Museveni down through the chain of command that Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) soldiers must stop rape, beating, exploitation and other abuses against IDPs
- The provision of physical protection around camps for IDPs seeking water, gathering firewood, and engaging in cultivation
- Strengthening of police forces and the deployment of police to IDP camps
- Strengthening of the court system by the assignment of judges to northern towns
- Acceleration of camp decongestion processes.

The Northern Uganda mission revealed that, while the NGO community has demonstrated strong leadership in advocating for the rights of IDPs in Northern Uganda, especially through CSOPNU, some NGOs have been more vocal than others in demanding that the government and the UN take more action to protect civilians. Humanitarian NGOs should raise their voices collectively in defense of the rights of Northern Ugandans to relief from the attacks and deprivations they experience.

Humanitarian NGOs can work to reduce and mitigate abuses through leadership and advocacy, as well as by taking direct action in the field, but cannot substitute for the Government of Uganda, which has the core responsibility to provide for the protection of its citizens.

Nonetheless, the NGO community has the obligation to strive towards public and specific recommendations regarding the need to protect the public both from attacks by the LRA and elements of the Ugandan military, and from the effects of deplorable conditions in the camps.

NGOs must find new ways to increase the momentum of interventions addressing the plight of IDPs in Northern Uganda, and move towards action by exposing inadequacies in government and UN responses to the protection emergency.

Humanitarian advocacy must also be directed inward towards the NGO community to ensure the development of protection initiatives at the field level that build cooperation among humanitarian actors, using effective monitoring and reporting to plan protection programming.

In relation to protection challenges, this report argues that NGOs should

- Increase their efforts to make protection a central concern of humanitarian work
- Mainstream protection in their strategic planning, operational set-up and sectoral responses, as well as doing stand-alone protection programming
- Redouble their efforts to work together on protection in a coordinated manner – particularly at local level in field situations – while respecting their unique mandates, abilities and flexibilities.
- Consider the importance and actual use of ‘humanitarian presence’ in supporting a protective environment.
- Look again at the value of humanitarian advocacy in highlighting protection concerns, as well as establishing and consolidating humanitarian space.

More particular recommendations, which apply mostly to NGOs but necessarily relate to government and UN partners and the broader international community in certain areas, are addressed towards the end of each of chapters three, four and five.

Chapter 1

Overview of Protection Concerns in Northern Uganda

The following paper is divided into five chapters, which offer a broad overview of the protection challenges that prevail in Northern Uganda, followed by a range of recommendations. While they are aimed primarily at NGOs, the United Nations and Government of Uganda partners are frequently addressed as well, since protecting human rights requires a coordinated effort whereby all actors assume their individual and collective responsibilities.

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the political, economic and social context of the situation in Northern Uganda, and of key actors, including the government, UN and NGOs. It briefly outlines how the communities have come to be encamped in “protected villages” – and the day to day suffering, abuses and violations that has meant for them at the hands of the violent LRA insurgency as well as their supposed protectors: the government and its military.

Chapter 2 briefly defines the concept of protection and explains what it means to humanitarian workers.

Chapter 3 highlights broad crosscutting protection issues and challenges, and discusses ways in which NGOs can begin to incorporate a protection lens into their programs and activities.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus to examine specific protection problems by sector, and puts forth recommendations for NGOs to consider in an effort to integrate protection in their sectoral humanitarian programming, water and sanitation, health, education, and so forth.

Chapter 5 examines a range of additional issues facing the communities of Northern Uganda, concluding with recommendations that may be most appropriate for NGOs with particular expertise in and that implement ‘stand alone’ protection programs.

1.1 The Internally Displaced Persons Camps

In 1996, as a sharp intensification of the LRA’s long-running and extremely violent insurgency caused large groups of people to flee their homes in Northern Uganda, the government imposed a policy of encamping the displaced population in “protected villages”. This was presented as a move to ensure the public’s safety, as well as a counterinsurgency measure to deny the LRA access to the provisions and abductees it needed to operate.

In spite of the Ugandan government’s stated justification for the camps as a means to protect civilians, over 80% of the population in Northern Uganda now lives in squalid IDP camps under constant threat of LRA attack. The proportion of displaced people is even higher in the districts worst affected.

Many people had less than 48 hours to leave the villages where they had lived their entire lives. The haphazard nature of the relocation exercise resulted in the separation of clans and villages. Basic needs were not met then and are not being met now. People became disorientated and their ability to cope was dramatically weakened.

Overcrowded conditions in the camps and a climate of abject fear have resulted in the placement of shelters close together without due consideration for health or fire risks.

After over six years in the camps, malaria/fever and HIV/AIDS are the primary causes of death, according to camp residents. Malaria/fever and *lango*, a local designation for illness marked by oral thrush, malnutrition and diarrhoea, are the primary causes of death in children under five.

These conditions, combined with insufficient water supplies, a lack of mosquito netting, the spread of HIV/AIDS (due in part to the unavailability of condoms) and a high degree of violence, give rise to **1,000 excess deaths per week** in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts.⁴

The lack of planning for communal spaces for schools, clinics, child-friendly spaces and gathering areas for each village group have resulted in further loss of a sense of community. In some camps, schools are not functioning and there is not a stimulating routine for children. Combined with the lack of security, this can exacerbate severe stress and anxiety.

The loss of land, cattle and other livestock means far more than the loss of livelihoods: it also means the loss of a way of life and tradition for a people who have been agriculturalists and pastoralists for hundreds of years. This has meant a dramatic and sudden elimination of many traditional male roles, and affected important rites such as coming of age and marriage.

The loss of traditional livelihoods has also disrupted inter-clan and inter-tribal relations based on trading cattle, dowry payments and other arrangements of interdependence that previously encouraged peaceful relations. Family burials near the homestead, an important part of the culture, are no longer possible. Older people interviewed during this mission reported feeling like isolated and disregarded strangers in the camps.

Despite their stated protection aims, the IDP camps or “protected villages” have been attacked by the LRA on many occasions, and continue to be a focus of the insurgents’ operations. Over 12,000 children, many of them very young, have been abducted since 2002, the year the Ugandan army (UPDF) launched “Operation Iron Fist”, a military campaign intended to destroy the LRA.

That operation weakened the insurgents to some extent, forcing them to operate more from rear bases in South Sudan, but has resulted in the LRA retaliating with even more attacks on IDP camps and committing more atrocities.

Since then, civilians and many civil society organizations have appealed to the government to seek a negotiated peace, believing that a military approach is unlikely to be successful and will only result in more suffering for the civilian population. Hopes of a negotiated settlement have been raised periodically, but the violence shows no sign of abating.

⁴ See “Health and mortality survey among internally displaced persons in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts, northern Uganda,” The Republic of Uganda Ministry of Health with WHO, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA and IRC. July 2005.

1.2 Failure to Protect the “Protected Villages”

The Ugandan military has demonstrated over the years that it is either unwilling or unable to provide adequate protection for IDPs in the so-called “protected villages”, which have never functioned as real villages. The basic necessities of life – such as food and water, health care and shelter – are unmet in most camps, while the entities that help establish a community (schools, clinics, religious centres, community gathering places, a market) either do not exist or are not functioning properly.

The critical need for IDPs to have sufficient land to cultivate food for their families has not been addressed, often due to the UPDF’s failure to grant access to arable land and/or to protect those civilians trying to grow crops.

Camp residents have little or no confidence in the willingness or ability of the UPDF to protect them from attack by the LRA. This is poignantly demonstrated by the nightly commute of tens of thousands of people, mostly children, from IDP camps to town centers (ranging from two to ten kilometres away) to protect themselves from death, abduction or mutilation at the hands of the LRA.

But the feeling of insecurity and level of fear present in the camps is not due to LRA attacks and abductions alone. A very serious issue that has not been adequately addressed by either the Government of Uganda or the international community involves the abuse of civilians by members of the UPDF and some Local Defense Units (LDU) militia.

Individual soldiers or groups have frequently misused power and authority to intimidate and/or commit abuses against the civilian population. Abuses have involved very serious human rights violations including rape, sexual exploitation, frequent beatings of IDPs, theft and extortion, forced labor, arbitrary arrest and detention, and even murder. Military discipline is lax and almost no cases have been brought before the courts, which are barely functional in some municipalities and do not function at all in others.

Police presence exists only in towns, so there is little civil protection afforded to IDPs in most camps. Interviews with law enforcement and civilians revealed confusion about jurisdiction, and who could or should address cases involving allegations against UPDF soldiers.

At the same time, some observers reported to the mission for this report that the relationship between the UPDF and Northerners had improved. As one long-time observer said: “Ten years ago the UPDF was detested by the Northern peoples. Clearly, cases of massive human rights violations contributed to this. The perception of the UPDF is significantly better today. The UPDF is not attacking communities and has not committed mass abuses, and is much better accepted today.”

While the situation may have improved, virtually all UN and NGO reports indicate that a major problem still exists in terms of command and control over the individual soldier.

Humanitarian access to many camps in Northern Uganda remains difficult due to security problems. The Government of Uganda says it lacks the resources to provide for the humanitarian needs of displaced people, and relies heavily on international aid agencies and the UN to provide for the food and other basic needs of IDPs.

UN organisations, including UNICEF, UNOCHA, UNCHR and OHCHR, have all made recent commitments to step up action on protection in Northern Uganda.

UNICEF and OCHA have now opened offices in several northern towns, and UNICEF has deployed three protection field officers. UNHCR has appointed an IDP/protection adviser to coordinate a “collaborative response” to the needs of IDPs, and a strong focus on protection.

A challenge to improved UN response on protection is that the Government of Uganda continues to reject possible replacements for the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, thereby depriving the UN Country Team of much-needed leadership.

OHCHR has committed to the deployment of a senior adviser, a field coordinator and three human rights monitors. A Kampala-based protection working group, which had been inactive, has been revitalized and will be coordinated by OCHA. Protection working groups have also been established in major towns in the North.

It is hoped that the increased involvement of the UN may widen the breadth of humanitarian space in Northern Uganda, and create a more protective environment for NGO operations and the communities across the North.

The GoU published the *National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons* in August 2004. The policy is consistent with the UN’s *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and is positively regarded by humanitarian observers, but has not been implemented in Northern Uganda so far. The challenge now is for the UN to support the GoU to implement its own policy, which is proving to be a challenge on a number of fronts, including protection measures.

UNDP has provided technical assistance through the provision of an adviser based at the Office of the Prime Minister, which is responsible for implementation of the IDP policy. A roadmap for realization of the policy is being developed by the First Deputy Prime Minister to submit to the cabinet and parliament for approval. The government will have to commit significant human and financial resources to achieve the IDP policy objectives.

Even if the conflict with the LRA ended tomorrow, protection and respect for rule of law would still represent a challenge in Northern Uganda, as society will struggle to recover and the people to come to terms with what has happened.

Although most Northerners want peace and see a path toward forgiveness, there will be those who will seek retribution. A trained police force capable of ensuring law and order, a disarmament and demobilization plan, a strengthened court system, and peace and reconciliation work at the community level will become extremely important as LRA members surrender and people begin to return home. The property rights of

widows, female-headed households and others must also be protected from those who may try to claim their land.

None of the components needed to ensure respect for the rule of law is in place at the moment.

Humanitarian organizations do not have the ability to protect civilians from all harm and it should not be expected that the humanitarian community can “solve” the protection problem. The responsibility to protect civilians, to stop and/or prevent violations, lies with the LRA, the Ugandan government and the UN Security Council. The latter has resolved to assist populations under attack in their own countries when their own governments cannot or will not do so.

Accountability for the violations rests with the LRA and any others committing abuses.

US-based and other NGOs that work in Uganda have been exploring increased engagement in protection for some time, and are ready to begin work at the field level. A workshop on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, sponsored by the UN in September 2004, identified five primary protection objectives for Northern Uganda:

- Secure safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance
- Improve camp management and conditions as an interim step to durable solutions
- Adopt significantly increased responses and special measures for women and children to address the effect of the armed conflict on them
- Reduce the availability of illicit weapons and improve conditions for readiness for demobilization of armed groups
- Establish momentum for reconciliation through the revival of judicial structures and effective reconciliation processes.

There is now a crucial opportunity for NGOs to help shape the protection agenda, to join with the UN in working on protection problems and needs, and to continue to advocate for the Government of Uganda, the UN and those governments with close bilateral relationships with Uganda to do more to promote peace and protect IDPs.

1.3 The Northern Uganda InterAction Protection Mission

In December 2004, Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU), an NGO coalition, published a protection survey entitled *Nowhere to Hide: Humanitarian Protection Threats in Northern Uganda*, which provides a comprehensive survey of protection issues in Northern Uganda.

Building on the findings of *Nowhere to Hide*, this follow-up report focuses on specific practical, field-level measures that can be taken by NGOs to enhance protection, strengthen advocacy networks, and encourage government engagement in resolving protection problems.

This report is based on observations made during an 18-day mission to Uganda from March 20-6 April 2005 and a review of documentation about the region. Almost two

weeks of the mission time was spent in Northern Uganda in the towns of Lira, Gulu and Kitgum, with side trips from Kitgum to Pader Districts. Extensive interviews were conducted with internally displaced persons, national and international NGO staff, government officials, UN staff and others.

The names of IDPs have been changed to protect their identities. Generally speaking, the names of specific NGOs are also withheld to prevent possible negative consequences for them of revealing this information.

1.4 Findings and Observations

The mission revealed that, despite the initiative to form protection working groups in the North, these groups are nascent and have been slow to develop concrete protection plans. Few NGOs have protection programs or have integrated protection into program planning.

Many humanitarian workers and managers interviewed stressed that, although they are ready and willing to become more engaged in protection, they need specific training and guidance – and, crucially, additional funding support for protection programs.

The emphasis in this report is on specific recommendations relating to protection at the field and advocacy levels, while recognizing that NGOs alone cannot resolve the most pressing protection problems.

The broad actions identified as most critical to IDP protection include: serious and expedited measures to reach a negotiated peace settlement with the LRA; steps that must be taken by the military and the Government of Uganda; the strengthening of police forces and the deployment of police to camps; strict and widely publicized orders from President Yoweri Museveni down through the chain of command for UPDF soldiers to stop rapes, beatings and other abuses against IDPs; the provision of physical protection around camps for IDPs seeking water, gathering firewood, and engaging in cultivation; strengthening of the court system through the assignment of judges to northern towns; and ordering local officials to accelerate camp decongestion processes.

A study of the UN and IDP protection in nine countries revealed that the quality of the UN's protection response often depended upon the leadership ability and personality of individual heads of agency, or the UN Humanitarian or Resident Coordinator.⁵ Certain NGO personalities also exerted a great deal of influence on the protection environment. The corollary is that one action-oriented person can make a huge difference and can 'jump-start' the protection agenda in a given country or situation.

Strong leadership is desperately needed to ensure that the protection of vulnerable populations in Northern Uganda is finally placed high on the regional and world agendas. It is time to explore possibilities that may be considered very difficult and to demand accountability for inaction.

⁵ See Simon Bagshaw and Diane Paul, "Protect or Neglect: Toward a More Effective United Nations Approach to the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons," The Brookings -SAIS Project on Internal Displacement and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Internal Displacement Division, November 2004.

The government's recent report on mortality rates in Northern Uganda⁶, and the failure to improve conditions over many years clearly illustrate the need for extraordinary measures to be taken in relation to protection. The proper decongestion of at least those camps with the worst conditions should be considered. NGOs should call upon the UN to step up its efforts to encourage the Government of Uganda to provide more effective protection to its citizens.

Among other things, the UN could consider offering the assistance of DPKO advisers with protection experience in Sierra Leone or elsewhere; have UNHCR send protection and camp management staff; and have OHCHR deploy human rights monitors to Northern Uganda without delay.

UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland could also ask the Security Council to urgently place the matter of Northern Uganda on its agenda, and to consider sending a mission to Uganda.

At the field level, decisions must be made about when and where to increase humanitarian presence, and how hard to push for humanitarian access. Is it too dangerous to maintain a full-time presence in the camps? Or are there some camps where a risk analysis might reveal that the presence of UN staff, for example, could reduce the threat of attack? The ICRC and MSF already stay in some camps. Good leadership requires the willingness of field staff to work through the scenarios and make recommendations to the country office.

Meanwhile, there are simpler, more practical but vital measures that can be taken at the field level. For instance, NGOs can hire specialists to collaborate with women and girls to prevent gender-based violence (GBV), and to respond to the needs of survivors by strengthening the health system and providing psychosocial support.

Aid workers can also work alongside elders and other members of the affected population to design programs to strengthen families and preserve valuable cultural traditions. Humanitarian "land task forces" can work with the local authorities to identify land available for cultivation. Specialized NGOs can train legal aids and offer assistance to the courts and police in building a reliable criminal justice and civil court system.

Crucially, all NGOs working in Northern Uganda can participate in protection working groups toward the development of coordinated, strategic approaches to protection problems that build on the strengths of each member.

Taken as a whole, this paper describes many of the ways in which NGOs can contribute to the promotion and protection of the rights of the people of Northern Uganda.

⁶ "Health and mortality survey among internally displaced persons in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts, northern Uganda," The Republic of Uganda Ministry of Health with WHO, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA and IRC. July 2005.

Chapter 2

Definition of Protection and Protection Principles

2.1 Definition and Concept of Protection

Protection encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law: human rights, humanitarian and refugee.

This definition is a result of a series of meetings hosted by the ICRC in which actors from UN, NGOs, academics and other relevant experts met over three years to analyze what this concept ‘protection’ means for humanitarian assistance.

While the definition is broad and not very operational, it remains the most widely accepted and used definition. The definition and accompanying explanation of the concept are explained more expansively in a booklet called *Strengthening Protection in War* (2000), which is the product of that series of workshops.

The booklet goes on to explain that protection comprises three types of activities:

1. **Responsive**: any activity aimed at putting a stop to or alleviating its immediate effects of abuses and violations;
2. **Remedial**: any activity aimed at restoring people’s dignity and ensuring adequate living conditions subsequent to a pattern of abuse or violations through rehabilitation, restitution, compensation and reparation;
3. **Environment-Building**: any activity aimed at creating and/or consolidating an environment – political, social, cultural, institutional, economic and legal – conducive to full respect for the rights of the individual.

2.2 Complementarity - Working Together on Protection

Underpinning effective protection is the concept of complementarity, or the coordination of different actors’ activities towards mutual protection objectives based on their unique mandates, abilities and flexibilities.

Organizations such as Amnesty International, for example, publicly hold to account and often shame states that do not uphold their human rights responsibilities to their citizens. Though this type of activity serves a useful purpose in a human rights context, it is not appropriate for NGOs working in the field in a humanitarian crisis, which is often in a conflict situation, for fear of reprisal against them or vulnerable populations by the authorities.

The UN has a unique protection role in that it alone has the authority to negotiate with member states to encourage them to uphold their protection responsibilities. It may also, through one or more of its operational agencies, be in a position to provide direct services in the field, which is equally necessary.

True complementarity should result in a beneficial synergy, with the combined actions of the group having a far greater effect than the actions of individual agencies acting independently.

2.3 Protection Working Groups

Protection Working Groups (PWGs) can be a useful tool to create momentum and attention on protection problems in a humanitarian setting. Bringing together relevant actors can enhance coordination and complementarity if the group can articulate concrete shared objectives and is committed to achieving those results.

PWGs can be useful fora in which to conduct joint assessments, monitoring and training sessions, and as conduits for information related to violations of humanitarian or human rights norms, or other abuses occurring. The issues covered by groups vary depending on the context in which the group is operating, but typically include problems related to land, return, sexual violence, etc.

2.4 Humanitarian Access and Presence

Humanitarian access is critical to protection: humanitarians must be able to reach populations in danger and, whenever possible, to remain with or near them. Humanitarian access is the key to all other humanitarian activity. Full and unrestricted access to all those in need of humanitarian assistance is the goal. Persistence, courage, good judgment, strong negotiating skills and creative thinking are all necessary to achieving that goal.

Closely linked to access is ‘humanitarian presence’, which can be critical to supporting a protective environment. Often the presence of outsiders serves as a witness to the abuses and violations civilians may be suffering.

Despite the apparent erosion in certain violent conflicts of the protection associated with humanitarian presence, it is widely held that in many situations – especially at a local level – the presence of humanitarian organisations (the UN and international organisations such as the ICRC, in particular) can deter or help put an end to actions that endanger civilian safety and security.

Humanitarian organisations and workers use a range of mechanisms and strategies to establish, consolidate, expand or protect humanitarian access, depending on the situations in which they find themselves, their particular imperatives, priorities and resources, the people they have on the ground, and the relative stability or volatility of the situation.

These include, among others: negotiated memorandums of understanding, rules of engagement (in relation to armed escorts for humanitarian convoys, for instance), alternative routes and service delivery methods, the establishment of humanitarian corridors through areas of violent conflict, and the advocacy of national or local immunisation days, with temporary ceasefires by all violent actors to allow the vital work of immunisation to proceed.

Staff security

Staff security is one of the key aspects of humanitarian access and is closely linked to protection issues. If humanitarian staff are attacked or threatened, humanitarian operations are usually scaled back or stopped for a period of time. If the attack results in the abduction of staff, serious injury or loss of life, organizations may decide to pull out altogether for a lengthy period of time.

For this reason, it does no one any good for humanitarian staff to take unnecessary risks or behave in a cavalier manner. At the same time, humanitarian workers are generally well aware that they are assuming some risk by virtue of being present in a conflict zone, and too much caution often means that work cannot proceed.

For these reasons, it is vital to have sound security assessments based on standard protocols and good judgement to minimize the risks to humanitarian workers and the potential disruption of their interventions.

2.5 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting on the conditions faced by affected populations is needed for advocacy, assessment, program planning and implementation, and evaluation.

Monitoring specific violations of international humanitarian law or the rights of civilians (and, indeed, combatants) allows patterns of action to be noted, tracked and reported. Ongoing monitoring and reporting allow for a planned, prioritized and strategic response to protection problems. Programs with coherent monitoring and reporting mechanisms are better able to respond to rapidly changing events.

Most humanitarian aid agencies today agree that staff should draw attention to abuses of humanitarian, refugee or human rights law, but some are unclear about how and where to do so, especially if it could endanger vulnerable populations or humanitarian workers.

Some NGOs remain cautious about how and to whom they should report problems; others argue that there should be “no silent witnesses” - that to remain silent is to essentially give permission for abuses to continue. Humanitarian organizations such as MSF see *témoignage* (the giving of testimony about the suffering of populations in danger) as an integral part of their mandate and mission.

Usually, there is a third path: the humanitarian aid worker can pass the information [to official or unofficial actors, for direct action or advocacy purposes,] in a way that will not reveal its source, or can wait until the source is no longer in danger of retribution.

While human rights investigations involve trying to determine the identity of individual or group perpetrators of abuses, to expose them and/or to gather evidence for criminal proceedings, humanitarians focus on assisting the survivor or survivors of an event, and documenting problems or abuses with a view to preventing others from being victimized.

2.6 Humanitarian Advocacy

Advocacy underpins the concept of protection since it is about influencing change and raising awareness among the decision-makers. Advocacy can be delivered through

soft and hard messages and by a range of actors. For example, human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch might issue annual reports denouncing the human rights abuses in a given country in order to shame the government into acting. Other organizations, such as the humanitarian NGOs may take a more subtle approach whereby they document abuses and violations but then report them onto human rights organizations rather than going public themselves and risking repercussions locally.

Coalitions can be formed among different groups as a useful means of raising awareness and advocating for policy changes. Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda is a good example of how NGOs in Northern Uganda have come together to press the government for changes and to bring international attention to the prevailing situation. The voices of many have proven to be stronger than one in this example.

All NGOs can have an effective role in advocacy, whether that involves working with local authorities to improve programming, with government agencies, central government or donor missions on broader-level concerns, or conveying information to their various headquarters so that wider audiences can be reached internationally.

Chapter 3

Mainstreaming Protection in Northern Uganda: the challenges facing humanitarian NGOs

3.1 Introduction

Building on the protection concepts introduced in the previous section, this chapter aims to outline these challenges in the context of Northern Uganda, and to provide recommendations and responses on the incorporation of protection into humanitarian programs.

3.2 Complementarity - Working Together on Protection

The humanitarian agencies and organizations working in Northern Uganda have a variety of mandates and missions, different levels of protection expertise and experience, and diverse priorities. It is critical to take advantage of their relative strengths and to combine efforts to improve the protection of vulnerable populations. Many Ugandan and international NGOs frequently work together on advocacy issues, but do so much less frequently on operational issues and, in particular, protection.

The humanitarian community, despite some strong efforts, has failed to sufficiently engage donors and the international community on the widespread deprivation of basic needs in Northern Uganda - and the effect of such deprivation on other protection issues, such as sexual exploitation and domestic violence. Donor visits to the North would help NGOs highlight these links. NGOs could suggest the formation of a donor group focused on protection issues and human rights.

In the past, in various countries, one or two influential donors have taken a lead in fundraising for protection programming by chairing donor groups. OCHA has also chaired donor groups interested in protection matters in some countries.

3.2.2 Supporting the Peace Process

To celebrate International Women's Day in Atanga IDP camp, Pader District, in April 2005 young women gathered in a central area and danced in the noon sun as older women sang:

*“It is because of the right to cultivate that we survive,
And the reason why we are here.
We want to go back home -
Come and hear what we have to say.
Our homes have become deserted places.
Please, convey our words to whoever can help us,
Because our situation is alarming.
To well-wishers and donors,
Help us and bring peace.”*

Nearly all those interviewed for this report stressed that, to protect the civilian population in Northern Uganda, what is needed most is peace: an end to the LRA's campaign and the Ugandan government's counter-insurgency operation. Many IDPs

say they will forgive and go on, but cannot go home until LRA leader Joseph Kony ends the insurgents' bush war. But some men who spent years with the LRA, having been abducted as boys, say the LRA is unlikely to make peace easily.

The longevity of the war, though, has given rise to a deep public mistrust of local government in Northern Uganda and the central government in Kampala. Many IDPs expressed the belief that the Ugandan army does not protect them because there is a wish to weaken and control the Acholi people in the north.

A generation of people in Northern Uganda has grown up knowing only war. There is an increasingly urgent need to forge relationships and partnerships between the people of Northern Uganda and other Ugandans – and, above all, to end the war. CSOPNU has been a proactive force in this respect and hopefully will continue to link with other advocacy groups to ensure that cognisance of the potential for peace remains paramount.

3.2.3 Protection Working Groups – developing the protection framework

Some UNICEF and OCHA field staff have led the establishment of a potentially effective protection framework now in place in Lira, Gulu and Kitgum districts. Protection Working Groups have been established that include government representatives, NGOs and UN staff. The initial focus of the PWGs has been on the development of monitoring and reporting mechanisms, with the hope of moving quickly toward specific responsive actions to prevent or stop abuses.⁷ Work has begun, but is still at an early stage.

Despite the small number of UN staff on the ground so far, and their relative lack of experience in Northern Uganda, their combined protection knowledge could be very useful for NGOs. They, in turn, can provide important leadership through their understanding of how protection strategies can be adapted to the context of Northern Uganda.

On the first day of this mission's visit to Lira, the PWG there met for the first time to identify protection concerns. UNICEF reported that the meeting was very well attended. It also said that a date had been set for an "action planning meeting" in which the group would break down into smaller task forces around identified issues, such as GBV, to begin planning and assigning action items on issues such as developing a monitoring and reporting system.

3.2.4 Complementarity - Lessons from Northern Uganda

Although the mission findings indicate that the UN-facilitated Protection Working Groups provide the best framework for complementarity in protection, the UN appears to be heavily dependent on NGO partners to deliver protection services in Uganda. In some cases, these services would be better delivered – and, arguably, can only be effectively delivered – directly by UN agencies with specific expertise. Partnership with NGOs will still be essential, given their targeted resources and knowledge of the field and local culture.

⁷ See recommendations on protection working groups, below.

One example is the need for a focused response to child soldiers with a full Demobilization, Disarmament, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR) program. Such efforts are traditionally led by UNICEF protection staff, in partnership with NGOs such as Save the Children and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Complementarity in protection work provides options in advocacy that would not otherwise exist. A Protection Working Group or coalition can discuss, for example, which organization is willing or able to go public on a given humanitarian situation, which agency or individual is best suited to approach a government agency or to approach a donor for support for a joint project.

Many IDPs interviewed during the mission expressed the view that local officials do not care about their plight and are only concerned about their own interests. For instance, IDPs complained (like people almost everywhere) that “the politicians only come to the camps when they want our vote - and then they never deliver.”

Through complementarity, local officials and IDPs can be approached by a variety of actors in the interest of building trust and reconciliation. Local government officials could help build trust and respect if they were to work alongside people in the IDP camps/protected villages to help build a school or Child Friendly Space.

3.3 Humanitarian Access and Presence

Safe and unimpeded access to displaced communities is essential to provide basic assistance and protection, as noted in the March 2001 *Report of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*. Too often communities are denied access to outside assistance and protection and the consequences are grave. Northern Uganda has proved to be no exception.

Humanitarian access in Northern Uganda continues to be extremely limited due to insecurity, especially fear of attack by the LRA, the inability or unwillingness of the UPDF to grant access to certain areas or to provide requested military escorts, and concern about landmines.

It was reported to this mission by a reliable source that, in late 2004 and early 2005, the UN had been waiting for over six months without an answer after requesting permission to travel without a military escort to eight camps near Gulu.

UNOCHA holds humanitarian coordination meetings in Kitgum, Lira and Gulu, during which humanitarian access is discussed. The UPDF has regularly been asked to attend specifically to discuss humanitarian access, but the challenges of access remain.

The restricted access environment in Northern Uganda makes it difficult to determine the effect of humanitarian presence – international presence, in particular – in discouraging LRA attacks. International presence is more likely to have an effect on abuses by the UPDF, since government soldiers would risk punishment if caught attacking civilians by a member of the NGO or UN community.

There is little discussion about the effect of humanitarian presence in Northern Uganda compared to many other war zones, perhaps due to the lack of experience

with the effect of such presence on LRA activity. Not a single IDP interviewed for this study, however, expressed willingness to go home without meaningful protection, which is something they do not believe they are receiving now.

IDPs were clear that the physical presence of NGOs, the UN and the ICRC makes them feel safer. It seems clear that the visible presence of humanitarian organizations, particularly the UN and international organizations (such as ICRC), will be necessary during any return and resettlement.

3.3.2 The Use of Armed Escorts

Most NGOs working in Northern Uganda travel to camps located outside municipalities only with military escorts. Some will travel only in armored vehicles or vehicles with ballistic blankets because of the dangers presented by landmines.

Military escorts are expensive (NGOs and the UN have to rent the vehicles, purchase fuel for the escort, and provide food and water and biscuits for the soldiers on escort) such that some NGOs are not able to visit many IDP camps on a regular basis. There are sometimes not enough vehicles available, forcing NGOs to postpone field missions. “The more NGOs that come, the more trucks go out,” one UN worker in Kitgum remarked. “The army needs at least six trucks per day for escorts.”

Some observers, including UN security, have raised questions about whether military escorts might actually increase security risks for NGOs, given that the LRA targets the UPDF (and most recently NGOs).

Military escorts seem to have no clear command structure, according to one NGO that uses escorts frequently, and the rules of engagement (ROEs) are not clear. Concerns have been raised about the behaviour and judgement of soldiers and officers, as well as the adequacy of communication protocols. This means that humanitarian workers do not know what to expect if a convoy comes under attack. It also indicates that there has not been enough discussion between at least that NGO and the army.

3.4 Consistency in Communications

NGOs operating in Northern Uganda do not share a common communications protocol. This is both a matter of staff security and a protection issue, since security incidents not only affect an NGO involved but the ability or willingness of other organizations to continue operations.

Once a reliable UN communications system can be put in place, security protocols developed in concert with the UN may help improve access. The UN Security Office in Gulu has offered to help NGOs with radio protocols and other security and communications information.

3.5 Staff security

Although staff security is closely linked to protection, linked to the ability to deliver humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations in a particular situation, NGOs in Northern Uganda do not share the same security protocols, creating a confusing and dangerous work environment, especially for newcomers.

While the absence of a system may have been understandable when there were only a few NGOs operating, there is now a need for increased professionalism so that the incidence of a missing vehicle or aid worker, for example, can be properly assessed and does not disrupt operations unnecessarily.

3.6 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting is vital to learning about successes and challenges in protection work. However, it is also essential to understand that regular monitoring, especially of pervasive human rights abuses and violations, is difficult. As mentioned above, when access is limited and situations are insecure, collecting information is a constant challenge. Despite the difficulties, it is important to try to do so to learn about program efficiency and impact, and agency explanations of their presence and corresponding protection activities.

Some NGOs remain cautious about how and what they report, and to whom. There are times when reporting a serious protection concern, or violation of IHL or human rights violation, could expose an NGO as the only possible source of information and result in expulsion from a country, or an attack on an aid worker or civilian target.

There are some humanitarians who argue that there should be “no silent witnesses”: that to remain silent is essentially to allow unacceptable practices to continue. Sometimes NGOs choose to “go public” on a situation in order to maximize the chances of actively assisting those who are suffering.

Usually there is a third path: the humanitarian agency can pass on information about particular humanitarian concerns or violations in a way that will not reveal the source, or can wait until the source is no longer in danger of retribution.

Part of the humanitarian response involves advocacy, which may be defined as organized activism around a particular issue. This can be through the use of persuasion, the provision of proof of wrongdoing, appealing to the global public’s concern about the plight of people in crisis, or perhaps “going public” to embarrass parties responsible for the vulnerable population into taking action.

It is important to be very clear that the possibility of retribution against both victims of abuses and monitors is high once there is a monitoring system in place and the authorities are more effectively held to account.

Information for advocacy – such as on the dangers and deprivation faced by IDPs in Northern Uganda - must be gathered according to standards that build credibility and support responsible and sensitive use of the information.

Though most humanitarian workers are not trained to gather evidence or data as many human rights workers are, there is increasing overlap in skills and mandates as humanitarians become involved in protection work.

In Northern Uganda, the use of Community Volunteer Centers (CVCs) as monitors for protection is problematic. The same people have been selected over and over again for a variety of activities by many different agencies, yet are often inadequately trained, poorly motivated and ineffective.

Humanitarian workers must be prepared to consider their specific role in protecting civilian populations and vulnerable sub-groups within the populace, preventing violations of human rights and other abuses. To do so, they must be able to detect patterns in violations, using methods similar to those used by human rights monitors or investigators, even as their humanitarian mandate keeps them focused on assisting the survivor of the event, and on trying to prevent others from being victimized.

Advocacy is an important tool available to humanitarian agencies to remind all actors of their humanitarian obligations and, indeed, their responsibilities to protect. Humanitarian advocacy in Northern Uganda involves finding new ways to bring international attention to the humanitarian crisis prevailing and the urgent needs of affected populations.

3.7 NGO Staffing Issues

Staff employed with humanitarian NGOs should be encouraged to understand, at a minimum, the basic concepts of protection and how it relates to their day-to-day function.

As a starting point, training is important for all staff members, paid or volunteer, but especially for those engaged in sensitive protection work such as on gender-based violence, reunification of FACs, etc. Training should be provided on an ongoing basis because of high staff turnover and the need for refreshers, especially as the local context shifts. Moreover, training is best conducted through a single group or agency with a pre-approved and consistent curriculum that is recognized across relevant agencies (UN and NGO), and which offers training of trainers for those who have more ready access to camp staff and leaders.

Training could be supplemented with advice and mentoring on protection programming from a “protection advisory team” within the organization or operating as part of an inter-agency protection working group. Such a team could include two or three protection expert advisors who have familiarized themselves with protection tactics and strategies used elsewhere that could be adapted for use in Northern Uganda. Team members could themselves provide, or find out, information needed by field staff, and relay protection concerns to headquarters and elsewhere, serving as a sounding board for ideas and listening to frustrations and concerns.

NGOs will also need to prepare staff to recognize and report appropriately on violations abuses that may occur during displacement, return and reintegration, including forced return, land misappropriations, gender discrimination, etc. NGOs will need to prepare staff to report humanitarian and protection problems to relevant authorities, and to keep records of such abuses and violations.

3.8 Recommendations on Mainstreaming Protection

This section highlights a number of recommendations and possible responses by which to create and enhance a protective environment in those parts of Northern Uganda where NGOs have humanitarian access, as well as to maintain and improve working relations with the UN agencies and government authorities.

Before looking at organizational and project considerations for improving the integration of protection, however, it is important to understand the crosscutting fundamentals that are essential to protective programming:

- Participatory approaches are essential to any data collection. Humanitarian workers need to understand how communities protect themselves and that they are there to support those mechanisms.
- Protective programming means thinking about issues of equity and non-discrimination. Do your organizational structures reflect these principles in terms of women employed, equal consideration of ethnicity, and so forth? Does project implementation and monitoring take these principles into consideration?
- Gender issues need to be given adequate attention and consideration. Effective mainstreaming of gender-positive programming improves the protection environment for women and girls.
- Data needs to be disaggregated by gender and age, ensuring that monitoring is effective and that program design is based on specifics rather than generalities

In relation to Enhancing Complementarity, it is recommended that NGOs operating in Northern Uganda:

- Work in close consultation with organizations that have specific protection mandates (such as the ICRC, UNICEF, UNHCR, OHCHR and UNOCHA) in the development of protection strategies and the implementation of programs. This should help agencies avoid duplication, confusion and the possible compromise of one another's action, whether through PWGs or other mechanisms.
- Participate in the UNICEF/OCHA-facilitated PWGs, given the resources and stated commitment of UNICEF and OCHA to ensure follow-through on protection matters and to fully engage with partners.
- Insist that the UN does not fall short in the deployment and activities of UN staff with specific expertise and, specifically, that the UN commits the necessary funding and staff resources towards the protection of IDPs.
- Request the immediate designation of a UPDF protection liaison officer for each district to address alleged abuses of civilians, especially IDPs, by UPDF soldiers. NGO and UN protection officers should work very closely with these protection liaison officers, inviting them to protection training, PWG meetings etc, and encouraging them to join in visits to the field to discuss protection concerns with IDP leaders.
- Work with the local government to develop confidence-building measures to work towards a change in many IDPs' perception of it as untrustworthy, corrupt or indifferent to their plight.

To this end, NGOs could:

- o Persuade local official to meet IDP delegations, and organisation of elders, women, youths and others to take part in such delegations. Perhaps some common ground will be found that can be built on in the future.
- o Invite religious leaders to hold religious services in camps to which RDCs and LCs are invited to worship with the people, foregoing any special recognition of their attendance (and avoiding political entanglements).
- o Suggest that local leaders work to earn the trust of those they represent by physically helping to build a Child Friendly Space, bringing family members to meet the IDPs, making more of an effort to visit the camps, etc.
- o Invite local government officials or leaders to take a public stand on an issue of importance to IDPs, via radio and newspaper. This will also make people feel they have been heard (though it should not only be during elections, when it may be seen as too convenient, or worse, manipulative).

In relation to Protection Working Groups, it is recommended that NGOs operating in Northern Uganda:

- Ensure that PWGs have a focal point, an agency or person who plays the role of facilitator or chair (not director or coordinator).
- Have PWGs meet regularly. In areas where there are serious, ongoing protection problems, or where the group is just beginning its work, meetings should take place weekly or at least bi-weekly. Once a month is not enough.
- Keep membership as consistent as possible within NGOs. Having a different person attend each week inhibits progress in PWGs.
- Agree ground rules from the first meeting, although they can always be changed upon agreement of the group. The group should agree beforehand about what should happen if anyone does not respect the ground rules.
- Appoint a rapporteur. Ideally, the facilitating agency will arrange to contact all group members to remind them of meetings and to remind them of any reports they are expected to make at the next meeting.
- Genuinely share information at PWG meetings, except when doing so would compromise the safety of persons or specific protection endeavours. The group should agree on how and what information should be shared, and members should be very clear about what information should *not* be shared.
- Invite non-PWG members to PWG meetings as necessary and useful, but limit their participation to discussion of the matter that immediately concerns them.
- Hold PWG meetings in a secure environment, with the need for discretion (in some unusual cases, secrecy) emphasized.
- Protect the identities of people in individual protection cases within the PWG as a matter of confidentiality and safety. Information about the identity of persons at risk should be shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- Avoid PWG involvement in any activities that could be construed as political. Protection teams may decide to pass information on to human rights groups or other groups that can publicize information, rather than speaking out themselves.
- Ideally, PWGs should establish communication channels, information sharing protocols and a shared database. Once a system is established, NGOs can feed information to the group and into the database based on their observations and

findings. Depending on the information provided and the need for follow-up, the UN can then take the appropriate action based on the facts, without identifying which NGO provided the information. This simultaneously spares the NGOs from being placed in threatening situations for providing such information yet ensures that problems are followed up.

- Set specific goals for PWGs and identify the objectives necessary to reach them. The goals should be clear, realistic and achievable within a relatively short period of time. The group should focus on solutions and delegation of discrete, manageable steps toward definite objectives, it should resist falling into a pattern of endless discussion about problems.
- Specify action points for every problem addressed. The minutes should be clear about what actions will be taken and by whom.
- Keep minutes of PWG meetings that create a record of general discussion topics. Sensitive information should be left out of the minutes, which should be kept together in a secure, consistent place and should reflect any commitments made by members. The last meeting's minutes should be provided to members at the beginning of each meeting. These minutes should generally not be taken out of the PWG meeting, but turned in to the facilitator after perusal to avoid the possible compromise of the work of the group due to their loss or mishandling.
- Note deadlines for any commitments made. For example, "UNICEF agrees to contact the camp leader in ____ (Camp) regarding problems with the use of the Child Friendly Space by _____ on ____ (date)."
- Evaluate a PWG's performance each quarter at least, to assess whether commitments have been kept, the actions identified and agreed on have been taken, etc.

In relation to the Use of Armed Escorts, it is recommended that NGOs operating in Northern Uganda:

- Establish what, if any, Rules of Engagement exist, and consider the acceptability of the ROEs given the humanitarian purpose;
- Make every effort to determine in advance what communication protocols will be used by the armed escort;
- Assess the risks associated with any inappropriate behavior by military escorts;
- Request that there be a designated commander for each escort. The commander should be identified before departure. If the commander is unknown to the NGO leader, the ROEs should be discussed in advance, as well as any other ground rules (such as no alcohol, no transport of civilians, measures that will be taken if the convoy comes under fire, etc);
- Continually evaluate the need to travel in armoured vehicles, which are exorbitantly expensive and may not be necessary or useful;
- Consider how to handle soldiers drinking while in camps, the transportation of civilians, or other inappropriate behavior by military escorts.

In relation to Communications, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should consider:

- The use of a common radio frequency and distress signal;

- The use of common waypoints for radio check-ins with home base on certain routes;
- Using common place names (some places are identified by several names);
- Agreed emergency strategies, including evacuation procedures, an emergency meeting point, communication signals and code words, etc. (The UN will evacuate NGO staff only if there is room available at expense to the NGO, and will not evacuate national staff);
- Training staff members in proper radio procedures (offered by the UN Security Officer for Northern Uganda);
- Talking to the UN Security Team on the possible facilitation of a radio communications base by WFP.

In relation to Staff Security, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should:

- Confer with UNSECORD regarding its security analyses and updates. At the time of mission, the UN security representative in Gulu, having reviewed past security incidents and consulted with a variety of sources, considered that the LRA did not have a general policy of attacking NGOs.
- Consider the risks to national staff (often targeted rather than international staff) and discuss plans for the care of staff and their families in the event of expatriate staff being evacuated. In other situations, NGOs have ensured that a reserve cash supply is on hand to help staff survive, left food and water supplies hidden, left vehicles and keys, designated a gathering place or hiding places to be used in case of emergency, etc.
- Consider sharing more security information with UN security staff in the field. (A UN official in Kampala claimed that many NGOs do not wish to share security information with the UN, and implied that this was hampering the UN's efforts).⁸
- Discuss one another's security protocols in order to learn from one another.
- Consider (for those moving only with UNICEF in armored vehicles) the message that moving around only in armored vehicles sends to the population – and to the LRA, which may gain the impression that the UN is intimidated, when some NGOs are able/willing to access the same areas without an escort.
- Question whether one UN Security Coordinator is sufficient to cover all of Northern Uganda.
- Request more clarity from the UN and UPDF regarding landmine risk. Is a Mine Action Center needed for Northern Uganda for safe access and for safe return of the population?
- Put in place and adhere to strict regulations regarding seat belt use and violations of seat belt use. (Many NGOs do have regulations that are consistently ignored by field staff).
- Establish penalties for staff violations of curfew.

NGOs new to working in Northern Uganda should:

- Interview those organisations operating in the field about their experiences in Northern Uganda, and the reasons for their particular approaches to security. They might include those NGOs that travel without escort (such as the Norwegian Rescue Committee and Action Contre la Faim) and who spend the

⁸ Interview with UN official in Kampala; 23 March 2005. Name and agency withheld.

night in some camps (MSF Netherlands). They might also speak to those who place specific restrictions on travel, such as Oxfam, which at the time of the mission was not permitting expatriates to travel between towns in the North; and IRC, which required vehicles travelling outside municipalities to have ballistic blankets.

In relation to Humanitarian Access, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should:

- Address the need for improved access at every meeting with representatives of the Government of Uganda, including its military representatives, and with every donor.
- Work through humanitarian access issues with UN security staff members and with WFP, which has a wealth of experience in this area;
- Regularly review the chronology, type and location of security incidents involving humanitarian relief operations.
- Consider the implications of widely varying security policies for humanitarian access.
- Consider increasing presence in the field where they feel there is an acceptable level of risk

The UN should:

- Consider maintaining a 24-hour presence in certain camps. An increased UN presence should help create more humanitarian space within which NGOs can work.

The humanitarian community, in thinking about its role in protection, should ask the following questions about presence:

- Is humanitarian presence used consciously and strategically for the specific purpose of improving protection?
- Do FACs/adults believe that the presence of humanitarian aid organizations would discourage LRA attacks? If so, which organizations might be most effective?
- Have there been negative effects of a passive presence? Are the perpetrators of abuses becoming inoculated against the presence of internationals? Do they seem unconcerned about committing abuses in front of internationals? If so, the situation is much more serious than one in which the presence of internationals serves as a deterrent, even an imperfect one. If this is the case, what is being done to address the problem? Is there awareness of the problem?
- Have organizations taken the potential effect of increased field presence into consideration?

In relation to Monitoring and Reporting, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should:

- Ensure that all humanitarian staff should know how and to whom to report violations of human rights and humanitarian law from the first day they arrive in the field. Information on violations, duly verified and noted, should be relayed to the PWGs and/or OHCHR for appropriate follow up (see PWG recommendations). Staff should be trained to ensure that this happens.
- Offer training and ongoing support in protection to field-level representatives of all humanitarian NGOs. Where possible, humanitarian workers in Uganda

should be offered training in international human rights and humanitarian law, and in Ugandan human rights law, to help them understand the context of violations, and so that they can coordinate more effectively with their human rights colleagues. (Caveat: This training must be very practical in nature, so that it is relevant to people in their everyday work. Highly legalistic or theoretical training about treaties and laws is not useful. Training is also more successful when there is follow-up training rather than a one-off event.)

- Provide training about the justice system for those working with survivors, so that they can convey accurate information to survivors regarding the options available and a realistic view of the situation in the courts. Para-professionals in some camps have already been trained to collect information on GBV. Both UNICEF and UNOCHA are working with NGOs to create better documentation systems.
- Provide practical training and mentoring, which has been found to be valued more highly by field staff than formal training.
- Establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems, and learn about the ethical collection of data, be able to develop a useful and statistically valid survey (or to use an existing instrument) that can be analyzed and applied to programming. Some human rights data collection instruments are used to gather statistically significant information about the incidence and prevalence of certain violations, for advocacy purposes or for legal reasons. Humanitarian workers are also likely to be interested in incidence and prevalence, but are more likely to use data to determine patterns of abuse to permit the development of prevention tactics, identify those at highest risk, etc.
- Provide cross-training with other NGOs, UN agency staff, government staff, military and police officials on special topics in protection. One effective approach would be to provide mentors for people working in Northern Uganda on various protection issues, in the form of mobile protection advisory teams of field staff with direct experience in protection work.

NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should also:

- Make confidentiality and the storage and access to sensitive data a paramount concern. NGOs should consider asking UNICEF to keep a confidential central database that can be downloaded to Kampala from each district. No district would have access to the entire database and no entity other than UNICEF would have access to the entire database, with perhaps the exception of a major NGO partner. This method is used in one country to prevent data from falling into the wrong hands. UNICEF could analyze the data and come to an agreement with NGOs as to how the data would be used in terms of advocacy and planning. A formal Memorandum of Understanding could be written between UNICEF and its implementing partners relating to the use of data.
- Ensure accurate monitoring and reporting, which is especially critical in cases involving government, since governments typically deny involvement in abuses and will focus on any erroneous reporting. The training of monitors should be thorough, and data collection should be consistent. NGOs should check and cross-check information.
- Analyze data to determine patterns of attack, identify groups of perpetrators and high-risk areas; develop an understanding of how victims are selected; document the response of the police, local authorities and the military to reports of abuses, etc. This data will help prioritize areas such as assault

prevention, provide information that can be used in advocacy work, and estimate the prevalence of the problem.

- Monitor any decrease in attacks to see if tactics are effective.
- Create anonymous means for people to come forward and report problems. For example, complaints boxes could be set up in selected areas of camps so that people can report any incidents of exploitation or abuse.
- Select staff members carefully, based on their motivation, skills, training and gender balance, and re-examine the use of Community Volunteer Centre staff as monitors for protection and human rights. Rather than selecting staff for programs based on their current involvement in programs, training sessions of one to two days should be held for prospective staff, allowing them the opportunity to be selected on the basis of their motivation and performance during this session.

In relation to Protection Training, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Provide staff with a clear understanding of their agency's role in protection and its expectations regarding their skills and knowledge in this area;
- Introduce new staff with limited field experience to the functions of various agencies, and train them to consult with others before beginning new programs - not for permission, but to ensure the best outcome for persons who may be at risk;⁹
- Take longer to start up a program with appropriate training in place rather than hastily put in place a poorly planned one. This should be the case in spite of difficulties with accessing camps, time limitations imposed by security issues and other reasons interviewees cited for inadequate training.
- Train those who supervise field staff on protection principles, protection programming and practical ideas for intervention, as well as the legal framework for action (international humanitarian and human rights law, domestic law and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement);
- Provide field staff with a basic briefing book on the situation in Northern Uganda, including writings by NGO workers and others with experience in-country;
- Provide all field-based staff with basic protection training, focusing on its practical aspects, with some relevant legal information and practical exercises in protection programming. This should be followed up, as required, with additional mentoring specific to their program areas.

NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should also:

- Provide those staff with specific protection responsibilities, such as in Gender-Based Violence (GBV), health or education programs, with additional specialized training both in-country and regionally when they are under long-term contract. Staff should be given training opportunities as rewards and investments by the organization in their current work and futures;
- Provide sectoral staff with in-depth training on the linkage between their sector and protection, focusing on practical protection strategies and the use of protection checklists in the field (with contractors as well as with manual laborers).

⁹ALNAP, Pilot Version by Hugo Slim and Luis Enrique Eguren, "Humanitarian Protection: A Guidance Booklet".

- Share trainers whenever possible, and work together on a basic protection training course that could be taught to an in-country group of trainers;
- Develop a “protection advisory team” that travels throughout the North to help field staff with protection programming and devise responses to specific problems. This team would visit field staff on a regular basis, perhaps travel with them to a camp where they are working, and discuss specific protection issues.
- Take the time to debrief or request a “lessons learned” meeting with departing staff. This is often difficult, with staff members in a rush to get home or to their next assignment, but the information they take with them is invaluable.

In relation to Staff Motivation and Retention, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Ensure that managers provide for a “safe forum” for staff to vent their frustrations, air program ideas and get advice, and discuss problems and solutions: it is important that staff members feel they have been heard, even if there are no immediate solutions to their problems;
- Work to improve communication and mutual understanding between management and staff members, and between international and national staff members;
- Look to provide training, travel or new work opportunities that motivate staff and bolster morale;
- Stay alert for signs of stress, burnout and trauma among staff members, and address problems as quickly as possible where they arise.

Chapter 4

Integrating Protection in Sectoral Humanitarian Assistance

4.1 Introduction

While the previous section looked at broader protection approaches for humanitarian NGOs, this one focuses on a number of humanitarian sectors and examines protection problems associated with these areas of work, along with their consequences. The section concludes with recommendations on how to integrate protection considerations into these sectors.

4.2 Water and Sanitation

A major protection issue associated with poor water supply and poor sanitation in IDP camps involves the risk of abduction, sexual violence, beatings and other abuses, committed primarily against women and girls. This is often the case when people are forced to leave the camp to get water because the supply inside is inadequate due to overcrowding, commandeering of water by the UPDF, poor water pressure or broken water pumps or spigots.

A second major concern involves the adequacy of water supply for each family and the possibility of water-borne diseases, especially cholera. There have already been several cholera outbreaks in the IDP camps in Northern Uganda.

Thirdly, poor water supplies in the camps results in children being sent for water outside, or to locations away from their homes within the camps, which places them at risk of abduction by the LRA and sexual assault. They also miss school time.

Fourthly, a poor water supply can negatively affect human dignity. In the IDP camps in Northern Uganda, water is used first for drinking, then for cooking and cleaning dishes, and often last for bathing and washing clothes. It is an indignity to be forced to go without bathing or clean clothing due to a lack of water.

The Ministry of Health study cited above revealed that water availability in Gulu, Pader and Kitgum districts fell below the 15 litres per person per day recommended in the *Sphere Minimum Guidelines for Disaster Assistance*, and collection times were high.¹⁰

In targeting camps, humanitarian agencies should include consideration of protection concerns, such as attacks and abductions that occur as a result of water shortages or the location of water supplies, as well as health matters.

The widespread use of contractors has raised questions for some NGOs about the quality of work (leading to frequent repairs or sub-standard completion of jobs leading to non-operability), as well as the level of awareness of protection issues. Contractors may not routinely report on problems with the population's access to water, abuses at water points etc.

One suggestion involves the development of a one-page checklist that water engineers, laborers and contractors are trained to fill out on each visit to a water site

¹⁰ Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/index.htm>

for a predetermined period of time, in order to obtain a baseline of the problems in a particular area. Eventually, it is held, water engineers/workers will understand the connections between water and protection and may pick up additional information. They will also come to understand the importance of their work beyond the provision of clean water, and see that water problems require urgent solutions.

Whatever the particular response in different camps to address different situations, it is clearly time for a concerted effort on the part of NGOs, working in partnership with IDPs and district officials, to concentrate on water and sanitation as a primary protection concern. The specific protection consequences related to water and poor sanitation are detailed below.

4.2.1 Water and Sanitation Problems Relating to Protection

Insufficient water supply

During the third quarter of 2005, UNICEF estimated that the water availability in camps in Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader districts was 4-8 litres per person per day. That is far short of the 15 litres per person per day recommended in the Sphere guidelines.

A USAID team visiting the North noted waits of up to six hours for water at hand pump collection sites, a situation that is forcing families to use water from unsafe surface sources, increasing the risk of disease.¹¹

“The issue of water is very serious,” the camp manager reported in Awer Camp, Gulu District. “There are eight boreholes but two are not working. There are two shallow wells but one is not working. If one were to divide the camp into zones, some zones have no water. There are eight protected springs, but three are not working.”

“We don’t have enough water. If you come in the morning you can wait [a very long time] for water at the water point in the camp”, women leaders at Atanga Camp in Kitgum Sub-District said.

“There are seven boreholes in the camp but only two have good pressure. There is a stream behind here, about 1½ miles away; people fear going there but they go there anyway. The rebels use that stream also. The stream is about it. A month back a man went to cut firewood with his son near that stream but the UPDF killed him and arrested the son.... The UPDF said they did this because they didn’t want anyone moving along the stream.”¹²

During the mission for this report, long lines for water were observed at Bala Stock Camp in Lira, where arguments broke out over water, and at Atanga Camp in Kitgum.

Deliberate denial of access to water

Commandeering of water points by UPDF soldiers was reported in Kitgum. Several NGOs have intervened when the military took over water points and, in some cases, were successful in regaining access for IDPs. There have been reports of girls and women having to engage in sex to secure access to water points.

¹¹Source: *Uganda Complex Emergency Situation Report #3 (FY 2005)*, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance.

¹²Interview in Atanga Camp, Kitgum Sub-District, 1 April 2005.

Poor sanitation /impure water

The USAID team noted above also observed poor sanitation conditions in the areas assessed, with ratios far exceeding the Sphere guideline of 25 people per latrine. Although some camps achieved ratios of 50 persons per latrine, the team found the norm was 200 persons per latrine or even higher.

Lack of jerry cans for water collection

Households in Erute Camp in Lira reported that they do not have the jerry cans needed to fetch sufficient amounts of water and have no other way to collect adequate amounts for family use. The availability of jerry cans should be considered when conducting water assessments.

Long waits due to poor water pressure and long lines

A household survey in three affected districts by the Ministry of Health team revealed an average of 2.7 hours to collect water across the Acholi region.¹³ The Sphere guidelines recommend a maximum distance to the nearest water point of 500m, a queuing time of no more than 15 minutes and that it should take no more than 3 minutes to fill a 20-litre container.

Researchers for this report observed that water pressure was not sufficient at some pumps to allow the rapid filling of containers and much effort was required to bring the water up to the pump. For instance, some young girls spent a lot of time jumping up and down using their body weight to pump the water. Long lines of jerry cans and people waiting for water were noted in every camp visited. The report of the Ministry of Health on excess mortality in IDP camps in Northern Uganda made the same observation.

In a camp in Lira municipality, a water pump had been broken for some weeks. One NGO observed that it takes at least a week to get a new pump from Kampala.

4.2.3. Protection Consequences of Poor Water and Sanitation Conditions*Risk of Abduction, Rape and Death*

Displaced persons in Northern Uganda decide or are forced by need to walk long distances into unsafe terrain for water. There is a high incidence of abduction and attack by the LRA, as well as sexual assault and beatings by the UPDF and others, when women and children are forced to go outside the camps for water.

According to ex-LRA fighters interviewed for this study, LRA reconnaissance strategies include watching camps for opportunities to abduct individuals as they go to get water or firewood, partly in order to obtain information from them regarding the

¹³ “Considering the entirety of Acholi region, households needed a mean of 2.7 hours to collect water on the day before the survey (time elapsed between bringing of water containers to source and returning to household with filled containers). Only a minority of households took less than one hour to collect their water...and in Kitgum and Pader Districts; around half needed four or more hours for this activity, with peaks of 12 hours. Time for water collection was also high [although slightly lower than the overall mean] among households using protected taps for drinking water...In this survey, only 2.7% of households collected their water in less than 15 minutes. From “Health and mortality survey among internally displaced persons in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts, Northern Uganda,” p.26, July 2005.

security situation in the camp (location of UPDF and LDU units, weak points in the camp, etc).

A woman night commuter interviewed in Kitgum town reported that a group of women and children who went with a UPDF escort to fetch water at a borehole outside Oryang IDP Camp were shot at by a different detachment of UPDF soldiers, after which one woman and one child died in St Joseph's Hospital. "There was no investigation. The borehole is not within the camp so these women had gone with some soldiers to go and fetch water, and when the UPDF from another detachment found these people at the borehole they thought they were rebels. The soldiers responsible took off."

Loss of Opportunities for Women, Girls and Children

Women desperately in need of income-generation activities will be less likely to participate given the time spent in search of water, firewood and food outside the camp. Young girls, who could greatly benefit from education and other activities, are spending much of their day getting water. Mothers send children to wait in long water queues, causing them to miss school.

Potential Violence in Camp between IDPs

Long waits at water points and boreholes has created tension among IDPs. During the visits to camps for this mission, women were observed arguing over access to water points, and jerry cans for water were lined up to the extent that it could take people much of the day just to obtain water.

4.3 Health and Protection in Northern Uganda

"Health services here are pathetic. UNICEF is paying community health workers, as does IRC [but] there are no doctors and no real health professionals — an overwhelming lack of health professionals in the camps. There is a limit to what you [as an outside agency] can do."

- Humanitarian worker, Kitgum

Northern Uganda has the lowest human development index rating in the country, with an infant mortality rate of 290 per 1,000 live births in Gulu, and 274 in Kitgum and Pader, compared to a national level of 88 per 1,000 as of 2002.

The Ugandan government released a report in July 2005 entitled *Health and mortality survey among internally displaced persons in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts, Northern Uganda*. The Ministry of Health and WHO led the study, in partnership with the offices of the District Director of Health Services of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, UNICEF, WFP, UNPFA and the IRC.

In relation to demographics and mortality, the main findings of the study were that:

- Both the child-mortality rate and under 5 mortality were well above emergency thresholds (1 per 10,000 per day and 2 per 10,000 per day

respectively) in all four surveyed populations, and were four times higher than non-crisis levels in Kitgum and Pader Districts.

- A total excess mortality of 25,694 (of which 10,054 are children under 5) could be projected for the entire Acholi region between January and July 2005, representing **almost 1,000 excess deaths per week**.
- Malaria/fever and AIDS were the top community-reported causes of death. (Some 60% plus of households do not own bed nets). Among children under 5, the top causes were malaria/fever and two *lango*, a local illness concept encompassing oral thrush, malnutrition and diarrhoea.
- Violence was the third most frequent cause of death (9.4%), occurring mostly outside of camps (68.8%) and health facilities (93.5%). The people killed were mostly adult males (70.1%), but 16.9% were children under 15. It was estimated that 3,971 people were killed in the study population between January and July 2005. An estimated 20 deaths due to violence occurred each day between January and July 2005, with an estimated six abductions per day.
- Age/sex population pyramids in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts display an apparent deficit in males 20 to 30 years old.
- Chronic malnutrition resulting in stunting (poor growth rate often resulting in short stature) was found to exist in Kitgum District, with 48% of children affected.
- Fewer than half of all deaths (54.2% among children under 5) occurred in a health facility, which highlights “serious deficiencies in access to health care for life-threatening conditions, and suggests that reports based on health facility data would under-estimate mortality rates by about half.”¹⁴
- The system of Community Resource Outreach Persons reaches only about 15% of the population.
- Access to health care services is limited in Northern Uganda due to the conflict. Inadequate preventive services and the difficulty of travelling safely to receive care when it is needed put the population at additional risk. Many have to pay for prescription medicines even if given free health care. Unfortunately, many families wait too long to seek treatment for sick children. Some 60% of health care positions in Kitgum District are vacant.¹⁵

4.3.1 The Particular Challenge of HIV/AIDS

Musicians in Atanga Camp in Kitgum District played and sang songs with the following lyrics:

*“HIV/AIDS is going to finish us off because of our living in the camps
We are fed up of staying in the camp, we are asking for help...
LCII, you should not be afraid to serve us
Our commanders—be open with us
We have elected you so that you can protect us”*

Many aid workers and IDPs expressed deep concern about HIV/AIDS. Most aid workers believe that the prevalence of HIV infection in Northern Uganda is twice that in the south of the country, but there are no verified statistics to prove this. According to the Government of Uganda’s National Health Strategy draft report (forthcoming),

¹⁴ Uganda Ministry of Health et al, July 2005.

¹⁵ Ibid. Pgs. 2-4.

hospital-based data in Acholiland indicate antenatal surveillance rates of 10% to 12% HIV infection, in contrast to other areas of Uganda reporting 6%.

During the mission period (March-April 2005) condoms were not available in several districts in Northern Uganda. The shortage or total non-availability of condoms was reported in Lira and Kitgum, and it is suspected that the situation was equally bad in Gulu and Pader.

Though UNFPA planned on a condom distribution by the end of April 2005, it was only to provide a three-month supply (since the organization works on a quarterly basis), with an emphasis placed on distribution in the North.

There have been complaints in one camp that there is a testing service for HIV/AIDS, but no antiretroviral therapy (ART) or other medical treatment available.

In some camps in Pader, near the border with Lira District, UNICEF found extremely low HIV/AIDS awareness among IDPs.

4.3.2 Alcohol Abuse in IDP Camps

“A high percentage of household money is spent by men on alcohol. In most camps, women reported that 70% of husbands spend all of their daily cash earnings, and they even sell food aid, to buy drink. One study conservatively estimated that men from the poorest families were spending around 20% of all household earnings on alcohol. Thus, alcohol must be recognized as a major constraint to the food security of women and children.”¹⁶

Beer drinking by men and women, but especially men, is widespread in IDP camps in Northern Uganda, and there is an extremely high level of alcoholism. Elders interviewed in several camps pointed to alcohol as a major factor in the destruction of the authority of parents, domestic violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS due to people’s loss of inhibitions.

A number of NGOs and civil society organisations have undertaken work on the problem of widespread alcohol abuse, alcoholism and related violence and health concerns, but the need remains for an NGO, church or other group to take a strong lead.

Given their efforts so far, the following organisations may have useful experiences and resources to offer:

The Italian NGO Voluntary Association for International Service (known by its acronym AVSI) has engaged in some programs that address alcoholism and has worked with young people and women to address psychosocial issues.

People with Disabilities, an organization based in Kampala, distribute information on all types of disabilities, including alcoholism. The group’s website is <http://www.pwd-u.org> or <http://www.pwd-u.org/home.asp>.

¹⁶ Judy Adoko and Simon Levine, *Land Matters in Displacement: The Importance of Land Rights in Acholiland and What Threatens Them*, CSOPNU and LEMU, December 2004, p. 35.

Serenity Centre is an NGO in Kampala that provides services to recovering alcoholics.

There are some Alcoholics Anonymous members in Kampala who have done some work with Sudanese refugees in the North and are willing to consider a pilot project to work with refugees in the camps.¹⁷

4.3.4 Health Issues with Particular Implications for Protection

The health problems in Northern Uganda that relate most to protection include the following:

- Poor availability or level of health services;
- Poor access to health services, especially for women overwhelmed with taking care of family members, marginalized people such as widows, and those with physical access challenges such as the disabled, invalid and older persons;
- Poor access for women and girls to reproductive health services;
- A lack of confidence in confidentiality in health care for HIV/AIDS patients, survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence, victims of domestic violence and others.
- The inadequate supply of trained health care workers, especially women;
- Levels of health care readily available to formerly abducted children and adults (who are even sent out of the region for care if necessary) are not available to the general population, which may create friction.
- A six-month funding gap for the provision of small incentives to community-based health workers.
- Widespread abuse of alcohol, especially among men, giving rise to violence, increased food insecurity, increased danger of sexually transmitted diseases as well as more generalised health problems.

4.4 Shelter, Settlement and Non-Food Items

Current Shelter and Settlement Conditions and the Need for Decongestion

All the IDPs interviewed for this report were adamant they would not return to their homes of origin until LRA leader Joseph Kony was in custody or dead. In any case, they will not return willingly until they have confidence that they will be better protected.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the current arrangement of shelters in most IDP camps in Northern Uganda is destructive of family and clan relationships, and of community. Camps have been set up in line formation, with huts nearly on top of each other, due to fear of attack. Overcrowding has resulted in an unacceptably high risk of fire, health risks due to the location of latrines near cooking areas, and inaccessibility of arable land to grow crops in what is an overwhelmingly agricultural society.

Life in the camps has eroded the societal mechanisms that previously provided protection for the young, vulnerable, powerless and poverty-stricken, and has created

¹⁷ Contact Diane Paul at dipaul@charter.net for further information

¹⁸ See section on Camp Management and Planning for recommendations on movable resources, work incentives such as tradable commodities, etc.

new protection problems. A compelling example was provided by tearful women describing how they prostitute their young daughters to feed their families, despite the knowledge that their daughters might become infected with HIV/AIDS, or pregnant by the grown men (many of them UPDF soldiers meant to be protecting the IDPs) exploiting young girls, thus bringing into the family even more hungry mouths to feed.

Decongesting the camps would not only lead to better camp conditions, but could provide opportunities for work for men and women, and training for young people. Decongestion would also allow for better security arrangements within and around camps, and the planning of child-friendly and family-friendly spaces within camps. In addition, it would create opportunities to build better participatory relationships between the IDPs, the government and both national and international NGOs.

This report argues that all camps should be decongested at the earliest possible moment, beginning with those in the worst condition. The UPDF must agree to provide more effective protection for camps. Ideally, there would be 24-hour international presence in camps during decongestion wherever possible, preferably provided by the UN.

This recommendation is not made lightly, nor is the scale of the task underestimated. The fact remains, however, that camp conditions are completely unacceptable and the concept that humanitarians should “do no harm” raises doubts as to whether NGOs should participate any longer in supporting the camps as they are.

More effective UPDF protection of the camps may require the support of the UN, possibly including UN Security Council intervention. It should be noted, however, that a number of the recommendations made below could be implemented independently.

Given that the UN is providing food to most of the camps and has developed a new comprehensive protection strategy, it should be willing to fly the UN flag in the IDP camps in Northern Uganda. Ideally, UN staff would be present in those camps undergoing decongestion but, if they are not able or willing for whatever reasons, the UN flag could still be flown while NGO partners are on the ground.

In the summer of 2004, UNDP’s Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery visited the North and recommended that “immediate measures be taken to make the camps better places to live while simultaneously providing IDPs with rapid access to employment and some cash in their pockets. Camp people should be employed...they should make improvements in walkways, fire-breaks, toilet areas and assembly points [etc]...UNDP and the government should take this up on a priority basis.”

NGOs with experience in camp management or with a protection focus are also needed to provide leadership and training for other NGOs and for camp staff. Ideally, UNHCR should set up and work with two or three experienced NGOs as lead partners in decongestion efforts in each of the districts of Northern Uganda.

UNHCR has an important role to play, given its extensive protection experience and specific expertise in camp management, the decongestion of camps and proper camp design.

IRC, NRC and UNHCR all have a great deal of experience in camp management, and NRC has been active in camp decongestion in the North. NRC might be prevailed upon to conduct a “lessons learned” workshop on decongestion for IDP representatives, NGOs, local government and others willing to make a joint commitment.

4.4.1 General Camp Design and Management¹⁹

Appropriate camp design and shelter arrangements are essential to creating a protective environment. Traditional living patterns, the number of female-headed households and the number of unaccompanied children are examples of population considerations that need to be incorporated into design and management. The placement of homes in relation to community centers, services and security must also be taken into consideration. These elements contribute to creating a safe environment that reduces risks and promotes appropriate living conditions.

The design of IDP camps in Northern Uganda is often inadequate. Greater effort needs to be made to mirror traditional village structures; enhance general camp security; address more personal security needs of particularly vulnerable IDPs, such as female-headed households, unaccompanied children and the elderly; limit fire, health and sanitation risks; and ease the general discomfort of difficult living conditions.

Particular efforts need to be made to ensure the safety of women and children, and to include women in consideration of the layout, design and management of camps. Camp managers also need to pay attention to risk-mapping, especially in relation to the threat of LRA attacks and the particular risks to women and children, notably as they go to and from their huts in collecting water and firewood, or to access farmland.

Some of the problems that IDPs face are very basic in their origins, yet far-reaching in their consequences. For instance, there is a serious shortage of plastic sheeting in some camps: every time it rains people get soaked and household goods get wet. A number of households reported not having plastic sheeting to fix leaking roofs. Some huts are of very sub-standard quality.

Widows and single female-headed households also have serious problems relocating their huts for decongestion or security. In Northern Uganda, men traditionally did the heavy work of building huts, while women did much of the thatching. Whereas tribal customs previously ensured that widows had men’s assistance, widows in the IDP camps often have to compensate men for their labor with sex, money or beer.

There are also shortages – at least in poorer and more vulnerable households – of adequate clothing, blankets, cooking utensils and other non-food items. Analysis is

¹⁹ Recommendations marked with a * are adapted from a working draft of a paper by the InterAction Protection Working Group entitled “Making Protection a Priority: Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Response.”

required of such needs, the reasons for them and interventions needed to address them.

4.5 Food Security, Nutrition and Food Aid

Food security is problematic in Northern Uganda for a number of reasons:

- LRA attacks, including the looting of food and arson, in addition to direct attacks on people that often follow food distributions.
- Although WFP has accomplished the remarkable task of feeding well over one million people in Northern Uganda for a number of years, the agency's food distributions do not occur on a regular basis in all camps.
- Some camps, especially in municipalities, do not receive food distributions.
- Access to arable land is a huge problem in Northern Uganda (see section 5.2 on Land and Property Rights).
- The local cost of milling grain into flour is excessive.
- When people are at risk of food insecurity, program decisions should be based on a demonstrated understanding of how people normally access food, the impact of the disaster on current and future food security, and the most appropriate response given conditions.²⁰

Households have a need for cash to have grain milled or ground for flour for bread. Beyond that, they also need cash to buy the various non-food items they need, whether school uniform or sanitary pads, a toothbrush or a jerry can. For these reasons, interventions that support household food security and offer the possibility of generating even a small cash income are welcome to IDPs.

4.6 Education

4.6.1 Education and Protection

Most schools in war-affected areas of Northern Uganda have been destroyed or abandoned. Children and teachers have regrouped in many cases to continue schooling in makeshift learning shelters within or near IDP camps. "Where a functioning school exists within the vicinity of the camp, this has had to contend with an overwhelming influx of children and, with them, teachers. Up to 15 schools in the case of Pader District [for example] operate in the premises established for a single school."²¹

Some 23% of primary-age children are not attending school in Northern Uganda, and 50% to 60% of all primary school children in primary schools in Pader, Lira, Kitgum, Gulu and Apac districts were still displaced as of the end of April 2005, according to UNICEF figures. Particular effort should be made to retain girls in school, or offer those who have already left opportunities to continue their education in some form.

There have been numerous reports of the sexual abuse of girls by male teachers. The recruitment and training of female teachers will help prevent sexual abuse if training explicitly addresses the problem and what teachers can do to protect girls, and if girls are placed with female teachers around puberty whenever possible.

²⁰ Sphere Minimum Standards

²¹ CITESTC, Emergency Education

Many girls drop out of primary school when they begin their menstruation. One project has taught female teachers how to make washable/reusable sanitary towels and to talk with girls about menstruation, a subject that could not be discussed with male teachers.

During visits to IDP camps, many children were observed running around the camps – and therefore out of school – in the middle of the school day, although many claimed they go to school “sometimes.” Families and children reported problems attending school due to the inability to pay fees and the lack of uniforms. Some said there were problems with local schoolchildren, or teachers, rejecting them.

In Ireda Camp, Lira Municipality, in the middle of a school day, the children said that most of them were not going to school “because if we don’t have a uniform they chase us away [from the local primary school].” Only one child of some 30 gathered around had on a school uniform.

“We used to study in the [camp] learning centre but it closed in January,” one child said. “If you have a uniform and all the requirements: a school bag, books and pencils, and can pay 7,400 shillings for a term of three months, then you are allowed to go to school.”

4.7 Recommendations on Integrating Protection into Sectoral Humanitarian Assistance

In relation to Water and Sanitation

- Those NGOs working in this sector should consider increasing their operations significantly where water supply falls significantly below Sphere standards.
- Other NGOs and their partners should bring a renewed focus on water projects, with particular attention to protection from attack of women and others forced to seek water outside the camps. UNICEF and UNHCR should be strongly urged to revitalize all water projects and initiate new ones throughout Northern Uganda.
- NGOs should work with UN agencies in the field to establish water and sanitation PWGs to address water shortages, access and other problems and to discuss practical protection strategies. These groups should include IDPs and should be connected to water committees in the camps.
- Undertake joint training of all NGO water and sanitation staff, with one or two NGOs taking the lead on organizing the training. The Ministry of Health's report on problems related to water could be used to illustrate problems.
- NGOs should undertake a jerry can distribution program, targeting those households without them as well as widows and other marginalized groups such as child- and woman-headed households, and older people.

NGOs working on water and sanitation projects should:

- Train *all* water and sanitation engineers, workers and contractors in basic protection concepts and the proper monitoring of protection problems related to water and sanitation. All contractors should receive at least basic training on the *Humanitarian NGO Code of Conduct* and protection issues.
- Organise household surveys on water usage in those camps where there appear to be difficulties, so that specific problems can be identified and prioritized and a baseline of sorts established. This may also provide new ideas for protection.
- Hold discussions with groups of women, girls and other camp residents to explore self-protection strategies. These might include:
 - Traveling in groups to collect water at a certain time each day.
 - Making children aware of the dangers of going off alone to collect water.
 - Identifying places that appear to be safe (places where there have not been problems, perhaps because the routes are well-traveled).
- Train staff to train contractors and camp water committees in monitoring and to regularly collect monitoring reports from the field. Over time, these reports should reveal improvement (or lack of) in protection problems related to water.

NGOs working on water and sanitation projects should also:

- Increase and improve monitoring of conditions at water points in the camps, with an emphasis on the participation of women and adolescent girls. (Some NGOs have established volunteers water committees in each camp where they have a water project. All NGOs should work with the same water committees in each camp, instead of replicating these structures. The committees should

be enlarged where necessary. Women should make up half the membership of water committees.)

- Train water committees on the linkage of water to protection. Simple reporting forms could be developed to encourage water committee members to report specific problems, including place, date, time and a description of the incident.
- Hold discussions with camp water committees as to how water problems can be addressed so that they are not left unresolved for weeks at a time.
- Train water committee members in basic repair techniques. An equal number of women as men should be trained in repairs; women could work together in special water brigades.
- Consider, as a matter of urgency, replicating Oxfam Uganda's 'concrete washboards' project (see above) throughout camps in Northern Uganda.
- Establish water points near schools to ensure adequate drinking water to students during the school day.
- Examine the feasibility of stockpiling parts (e.g. pumps) for water systems, so that there are not unnecessary delays in repairing them when they break down.
- Review the quality of parts used, since it was reported that some spigots and other parts were sub-standard and were breaking down frequently as a result of constant use.

Good Practice

Camp washboard project reduces dangers to women

Oxfam Uganda has constructed concrete "washboards" to enable women to do laundry without the risk of going to a river or stream to wash clothing. The washboards (6-8 feet wide) are placed on a slight slope so the water runs downhill. It is a simple project that only requires some cement and a well-regulated water supply, but could save lives by preventing abductions and attacks on women leaving IDP camps to wash clothing. Special areas could be made to allow women to wash sanitary pads during their menstrual cycles.

Good Practice

NGOs combine to advocate for IDPs' water rights

Oxfam, IRC and other NGOs have been successful in advocating with the Uganda People's Defense Forces to regain control of water points for civilians in a number of cases where they were commandeered.

The problem is still occurring in some places, such as parts of Kitgum where the military gathers around water points to set up barracks.

One suggestion is to put up a sign at commandeered water points that has "Women Only" painted on them in large letters with a picture of a woman on them. Perhaps then soldiers will be too embarrassed to use the water point, particularly if the sign is in English, has an NGO sticker on it and is quite large.

Of course, it is also necessary to have water points that are accessible to male IDPs. The use of signs such as those suggested above should be limited and temporary.

In relation to Health

- NGOs and humanitarian partners encourage the Government of Uganda to accept more responsibility in providing better health care and training health care workers.
- NGOs propose that an IDP Health Summit be held in Kampala, co-sponsored by the Ministry of Health and the NGOs participating in the July 2005, to raise awareness (including among donors) of the study outcomes and discuss plans for the improvement of health services in Northern Uganda.

- NGOs and UN agencies focus their efforts on improving the delivery of government services. This will mean close planning with the government, careful supervision of NGO-sponsored projects and good accounting for healthcare spending, as well as the regular monitoring of health care services for IDPs, especially in the camps.
- NGOs should consider limiting the focus of their assistance to hospitals to strengthening services to HIV/AIDS patients, GBV survivors and others with special health needs that are not being met. That would leave the overall strengthening of hospital services to mandate UN agencies, such as the WHO and UNICEF.

NGOs with experience in the health sector should:

- Expand their work to include areas identified as underlying and proximate causes of mortality in IDP camps. They should concentrate primarily on the improvement of primary health care, with particular a focus on the prevention and treatment of malaria, diarrheal illnesses, HIV/AIDS and other causes of excess mortality.
- Look to expand the scale of their work, in particular in relation to running or supporting health centers, training volunteer hygiene and community health educators, supporting community health workers and supplying drug kits should Donors should be made aware of the need for additional funding.
- Consider establishing full-time, professional mobile health teams to visit camp health centers on a regular basis, in an effort to improve health care and training for health aides/volunteers. This will require additional funding for vehicles or bicycles, training materials, salaries for health care workers, and the cost of military escorts (where needed).
- Work with district officials to improve the level of health care training for volunteers and health workers in the camps. The qualifications of staff vary, and some workers are poorly motivated due to poor training and pay. Training should focus on community outreach in the camps, to provide material items such as bed nets to prevent illness, to distribute information about the importance of prevention and treatment of illnesses linked to high mortality, and to work towards creating an environment where health information can be provided more openly to HIV/AIDS patients and survivors of GBV.

Good practice
Volunteers help build family sanitary latrines

During the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, some 12,000 families were supported to construct family sanitary latrines, supported by a strong female mobilization component using female volunteers. The initiative was so effective that other families spontaneously began construction projects without UNICEF support.

In relation to the Prevention and Treatment of HIV/AIDS, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Take immediate steps to address a number of key issues, including:
 - Increasing the ready availability of condoms in many conflict-affected districts
 - Improving HIV/AIDS awareness and education

- o Training health care staff in hospitals and clinics
 - o Developing mobile testing and treatment teams
 - o Ensuring the expedited distribution of ARVs to confirmed HIV/AIDS patients.
- Work to improve HIV/AIDS awareness and education. This could involve:
 - o Community information sessions to encourage discussion at home between husbands and wives, men and women, and young people.
 - o Enhanced leadership and public awareness efforts, which have been demonstrated to help reduce the HIV/AIDS transmission rate.
 - o Programmes to encourage peer-to-peer awareness-raising and education, especially among youths
 - o Using traditional song and dance as vehicles to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of HIV/AIDS awareness messages.
 - o Giving elders a role in HIV/AIDS education.

NGOs working in Northern Uganda should also:

- Devise and use creative methods to inform young people about the dangers of HIV/AIDS. This could involve, for instance:
 - o Expanding the use of football posters and uniforms to transmit messages about HIV/AIDS;
 - o Involving adolescents to produce and broadcast stories about HIV/AIDS for use in a weekly radio soap opera production.
- Encourage the UN to use the 'heavy lift' capacity it has to jump-start large programs and to obtain an adequate supply of condoms for the government, NGOs and health care workers to distribute.
- Ensure an adequate supply of condoms, and people's access to them, at local levels through hospitals, clinics, mobile health teams and health care workers.
- Make free condoms widely available in a way that does not draw attention to those taking them. For example, condoms could be made available in latrine and bathing areas, distributed along with food supplies or non-food items, placed in accessible areas in health centers, given out by volunteers in camps, distributed by shopkeepers at no charge to customers (with a poster outside announcing free condoms to avoid people charging for them) etc.
- Improve HIV/AIDS protocols at hospitals and clinics for GBV survivors, and ensure consistency in their use.

In relation to Alcohol Abuse,

- One or more NGOs should take a strong lead on raising awareness about the dangers of alcohol abuse, and tackling its effects.
- The humanitarian community should identify NGOs or churches with an interest in addressing addiction and engage them in creating a program to educate people about alcohol, and methods to stop drinking.
- Pay particular attention, in awareness and intervention programs that tackle the social and health effects of alcohol abuse through, to the linkage between alcoholism and violence.

In relation to Decongestion and Reorganization of IDP Camps, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Request UNHCR to provide staff to provide leadership in the North on camp management and decongestion/reorganization – or, at a minimum, to provide an extensive training of trainers workshop for NGOs (with IDP representation) on decongestion and ideas for camp set-up and management.
- Work to prioritize the camps to be decongested/reorganized in terms of the risks of attack by the LRA and of fire
- Ensure that the Ugandan government and military, local government, traditional leaders, NGOs, the UN and all its agencies present in the North, IDP leaders, representatives of vulnerable IDP groups and representatives of the host communities are included in the process
- Monitor the process to ensure it is truly participatory and that all voices are heard.
- Employ IDPs themselves, if at all possible, many of whom have been humbled by years of war and camp conditions, in any camp improvement works. Workers should be paid in cash and/or tradable commodities that can either be taken with them when they return, or traded for food or other items.
- Identify those most marginalized and tailor special services to meet their needs during decongestion or reorganization of camps
- Include, whenever possible, resources that can be moved to the sub-county level, such as school benches and chalkboards, desks, latrines, clinic containers with clinic kits, examining tables etc - all marked with the names of the sub-district for which they are intended.
- Use quality materials that will last in any immovable camp improvements, since they will undoubtedly be used by that part of the camp population that opts to stay behind in camps near urban areas.

In relation to Shelter Arrangements,

- Camps should ideally be arranged with the huts mimicking the original village composition. Each camp would comprise small “villages” (entities or groups of entities) set in a concentric fashion rather than in a random way.
- Where possible, camps should be organized so that there is a view of the horizon from every side. Higher ground is best. This makes residents feel more secure as they can see who is approaching from every side, even at night when there is a moon and clear skies.
- Huts should be placed safely apart to avoid spreading fires and for health and sanitation reasons.
- Single women headed-households with children and other vulnerable persons/families (older persons and those unable to run) should be assigned huts towards the middle of a camp.
- Camp management should consider a larger sleeping hut for women and girls near the center of the camp as an alternative to night commuting during periods when attacks have increased or are considered more likely.

Once IDP camp decongestion begins,

- Wherever possible, a small amount of land should be allocated next to each shelter for a single-family subsistence garden, or near every three or so shelters for a larger multi-family subsistence garden.

Good Practice
Clustered hut arrangement helps sustain clan groupings

When the safe haven system in Northern Iraq was created, camps were set up using a cluster principle instead of the “fire hazard straight line system” commonly used at the time (and still used in other places). This permitted groups of people, generally from the same extended family or clan, to place their tents in groupings of their choice in order to preserve family and community ties. They generally chose circular groupings.

- Separate shared kitchen huts should be considered to reduce fire risk and pool cooking chores. A cooperative arrangement would provide more time for women to complete other tasks. Men should also be encouraged to share cooking duties; such new ways of cooperative living can be introduced through discussion groups, child development programs, role models in soap operas (where a husband helps a wife who is pregnant or ill, for example), etc.
- Adequate supplies of plastic sheeting should be made available to IDPs to build or maintain rain-proof huts and keep household goods dry
- Each disaster-affected household responsible for the construction or maintenance and safe use of a shelter should have access to the tools and equipment needed for construction and/or maintenance. Special effort should be made to ensure that women, especially widows, can access assistance to build or maintain huts.

In relation to Planning and Risk -Mapping,

- Women should be involved in a mapping exercise of the camp to discuss layout and design, especially in relation to the safe and convenient location of latrines, bathhouses and water points.
- Camp managers should conduct risk-mapping exercises with youth and children to ensure that their perceptions of risk, which may be quite different from those of adults, are considered.
- The feasibility of perimeter fences around parts of the camp, and the effect these might have on intruders and inhabitants, should be carefully considered. Could residents become caught while fleeing an intruder, or could a fence help protect a vulnerable part of the camp if guards were posted there?
- Camp managers should plan for controlled growth or controlled shrinkage of camps (during return, for example) so that the camp does not become too porous or spread out, and more vulnerable to attack.

In relation to Camp Management, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Engage camp managers in discussions and planning exercises on the protection of women and children. They should encourage regular meetings with women to discuss protection concerns and create protection guidelines to promote throughout the camp (for example, to refrain from collecting firewood or water alone or in small groups, or male protection escorts to accompany groups of women if it’s necessary to leave the camp at certain times).
- Provide women with whistles and develop a community response mechanism to the blowing of a whistle.
- Help create community early warning listening posts with call sounds.

- Post signs clarifying the prohibition of abuse or exploitation and the means by which to report any infractions.
- Establish a ‘general complaints’ box as a mechanism for anonymous submission of abuse and exploitation allegations. Agree on a procedure to consider such cases.

In relation to Fire Protection, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Create fire squads in IDP camps and train them to respond to fires, evacuate people and other actions needed to save shelters.
- Post rules about fire safety around the camp.

In relation to Camp Registration, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Ensure that data about camp populations is disaggregated by gender, age, disability and special needs.
- Ensure that all families have access to registration. Establish a process to replace lost or missing registration cards.
- Establish criteria to identify and assist separated families.

In relation to Camp Food Distributions, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Establish and maintain a high presence of expatriate aid workers during and after food distributions to mitigate against the danger of attacks, which often follow distributions in Northern Uganda.
- Consider the possibility of having national and international staff live in distribution locations, rather than separate from the IDPs.

In relation to Cooking Facilities²², NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Ensure that each disaster-affected household has access to communal cooking facilities or a stove, as well as accessible supply of fuel for cooking needs and for heating.
- Provide that each household should have access to appropriate means of providing sustainable artificial lighting to ensure personal security.

Good Practice

Reducing cooking problems facilitates women’s participation

The use of alternatives to burning wood on open fires for cooking can have benefits beyond being fuel-efficient. According to Agnes Klingshirn, the use of efficient stoves, reducing the need for borrowing or stealing wood, led to fewer quarrels in families and more social cohesion. “Women also appreciated that they had more time to look after their children and chat with neighbors... Old people reported that they felt less dependent on the young who normally have to carry fuel/wood for them. This reduced tensions in the extended family.”¹

In the Women and Energy Program in Kenya, agricultural home economists reported that in Murang’a District, women would only come regularly to extension meetings and participate in new agricultural practices and learn new technical skills after they had energy-saving stoves and managed their homes efficiently. At a later stage, they were more vocal in community meetings and local politics: women developed initiative and self-confidence.¹

²² Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response
<http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/index.htm>

In relation to Non-Food Items and Shelter, it is recommended that NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Conduct a market analysis in a pilot project in several camps into the trade or sale of non-food items, including those made available to vulnerable families. Based on the findings, non-food items should be made available in an effective manner to vulnerable families.
- Provide blankets and bedding to those IDPs, especially women and children, who do not have adequate supplies, to reduce the general health effects and the risk of their having to move from their huts at night (with the risk of beatings or other abuses).
- Provide cooking pots to those women who do not possess them, so they do not have the problems associated with borrowing pots in order to cook for their families before night commuters have to leave their camps, or before nightfall and curfew.
- Encourage the production, trade or sale of selected non-food items. Suggestions would include jerry cans, cooking pots and utensils and handmade toys. (In the latter case, NGO could supply materials such as wood and non-toxic paint, small round wooden wheels etc.

In relation to Food Security, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Work closely with WFP to organize school feeding programs at both the primary and secondary school levels, especially for adolescent females at risk for sexual exploitation due to extreme poverty due to the breakdown of ability to access garden plots, lack of money to buy food and inconsistent food assistance each month.
- Target food distribution towards households with young girls aged 10-16, child-headed households, single female-headed households and others where GBV staff note particular threats based on food insecurity.²³

Good Practice
Poultry project protecting food security

Some NGOs, such as IRC and Heifer International, have provided chickens and roosters to families or to cooperatives. If managed successfully, a small brood can be expanded and the chickens or eggs produced can be sold. Eggs are a high source of protein. While some animals are difficult to rear in very crowded spaces, there is adequate space for chicken coops in some camps.

In relation to Education

- The Ministry of Education, UNICEF, Save the Children in Uganda, Save the Children USA, IRC and other NGOs engaged in education projects should evaluate the situation in each camp, and determine the need first for primary and then secondary schools to get up and running (in the context of decongestion plans, if a decision is taken to proceed with that).

²³ Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/index.htm>

The Sphere Minimum Standards state: "People [should] have access to adequate and appropriate food and non-food items in a manner that assures their survival, prevents erosion of assets and upholds their dignity [emphasis added]."

- UNICEF should be enlisted to join with one or two NGOs in working with teachers and parents on the development of a Child Friendly School model (they might want to consider one that had some success in Sri Lanka) or pilot program. Once others see the pilot they may become motivated to develop their own.

NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Make particular efforts to encourage the recruitment and training of female teachers, in order to encourage the retention of girls in school and their education about personal and sexual health matters that male teachers cannot address in Uganda.
- Develop particular programs to offer learning opportunities to girls who leave school early, especially those who become pregnant or have had children. Learning activities can include early child development as well as regular school subjects. School feeding programs are especially important for pregnant and lactating young mothers, many of whom are not receiving sufficient nutritional food.
- Encourage the development of education committees who can identify persons in the IDP community who have sufficient knowledge to teach subject areas. NGOs should also encourage WFP to engage in more school feeding programs, with NGO assistance and advocacy with donors for support.

Chapter 5

Additional Protection Challenges

The previous chapters looked at ways to integrate protection into humanitarian operations. The recommendations put forward are relevant for all humanitarian organizations and covered a range of topics - from hiring practices and trainings to looking at how to incorporate protection principles into typical humanitarian sectors such as food, water and sanitation, and health.

This chapter moves beyond the ‘mainstreaming’ approach and examines a number of problems and challenges that require what is sometimes referred to as ‘stand alone’ protection programming, or require a special expertise that does not fit into the traditional humanitarian sectors but cuts across a number of areas.

While the following issues and recommendations will not be relevant for all humanitarian organizations, the nature of the problems and their consequences are so dire that they need to be highlighted.

This chapter does not provide all the information and recommendations necessary to establish such humanitarian program responses, but rather aims to provide an overview of the challenges and outline some considerations for those NGOs that might be in a position to tackle some of these problems.

Among the most important of these protection concerns are:

1. Gender-based violence
2. Abduction and other forms of LRA attack
3. Land and property rights
4. Child soldiers: Protection and reintegration
5. The destruction of community and family norms
6. Night commuting
7. Abuses by the UPDF and allied militias
8. Legal and judicial issues
9. Return and reintegration

5.1 Gender-Based Violence

Based on informed definitions taken from the US-based Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, the Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium defines gender-based violence (GBV) as: ‘an umbrella term for any harm that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that results from power inequities that are based on gender roles’.²⁴

²⁴ Ward for Reproductive Health for Refugees in Conflict, GBV Tools Manual, 2005. See Resources for GBV, below, for information about how to access the manual. ²⁵ The term ‘survival sex’ is used to describe sex is exchanged for food or money to buy food in order to survive. “Transactional sex” is used to refer to the exchange of sex for items not required for survival. The term “transactional sex” is not used to imply that a minor or adult truly benefits from the transaction as sex under circumstances such as those that exist in IDP camps in Northern Uganda is by nature considered by most GBV experts coerced or as involving essentially an exchange that would not be made under normal circumstances.

GBV includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threat of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.

Gender-based violence is often neglected in humanitarian programming in Northern Uganda, despite being one of the most serious protection issues facing IDPs. Despite knowledge of a surge in GBV there, as in other conflict zones, the UN and NGOs have failed over many years to act in a decisive way to protect women and girls from sexual abuse and assault, which occur so frequently in Northern Uganda that many people seem to regard it as inevitable.

Awareness and response mechanisms are dysfunctional at all levels: familial, religious, community, governmental, medical, psychosocial and legal. Complaint procedures developed in some IDP camps do not work effectively. Survivors of sexual violence learn very quickly that revealing the harm done to them may result in social isolation.

NGO and UN workers report that some women feel helpless to prevent rape and domestic violence, whereas other women take preventive measures, with varying degrees of success.

Girls between 12 and 15 years of age seem to be at particularly high risk, since they are sought out by exploitative men in the belief that they will be HIV/AIDS-free. During discussions with IDP women at three camps, it was revealed that many girls and women (and quite a few boys) engage in 'survival sex' for food or the money for it, or in so-called 'transactional sex' to obtain a small amount of spending money or small objects²⁵.

The transport of girls from camps to towns for enforced prostitution - referred to in the camps by the code words of "going to town" - is engaged in by *boda boda* (bicycle taxi) drivers, camp block (section) leaders, and sometimes even by the girls' own mothers.

In June 2005, a long-awaited report commissioned by the Gulu District Sub-Committee on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, supported by UNICEF through the District Community Services Department, at Pabbo IDP Camp²⁶ revealed a number of important findings.

The three most common forms of GBV were found to be the following (in order of frequency and most common perpetrator):

- Rape, including marital rape (UPDF soldiers, husband, strangers)
- Child sexual abuse, defilement and incest involving youths (uncles, friends, teachers, soldiers)

²⁶ Okot, Christine Akumu; Amony, Isabella and Otim, Gerald, "Suffering in Silence: A Study of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in Pabbo Camp, Gulu District, Northern Uganda." Commissioned by the Gulu District Sub Working Group On SGBV. January 2005 (released June 2005).

- Physical assault (intimate friends, soldiers, strangers, spouses). Physical abuse by husbands often occurred when the husband was drunk (domestic violence).

The group found to be most vulnerable to both the risk of GBV and its negative consequences was females. Girls were found to be most vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, as well as mental, emotional and physical illness.

The causes of GBV were found to include: poor living conditions, exposure of women and girls to conditions that render them more vulnerable, lack of civilian security, silence about sexual and gender-based violence, alcohol abuse, and a lack of awareness of the issue. Poverty and a lack of any other income-generating activity also drive many girls and women into ‘survival sex’.

GBV is often not reported due to the fear of stigmatization. Girls who have been sexually assaulted are often teased cruelly in school, or are subjected to other abuses, causing many to drop out of education.

There is a great deal of mistrust that local authorities will take any meaningful action on GBV, since they are widely considered corrupt and disrespectful. Most people tend to look to traditional cleansing rituals, or sometimes the payment of money instead of using the legal system, which does not function to any great effect. Most of those interviewed (70 out of 100) did not know that there were laws in Uganda against GBV.

Medical treatment is inadequate and camp clinic staff are not properly trained to provide appropriate care to GBV survivors. There is also a need for more information about morbidity and mortality among survivors/victims of sexual assault.

Although rape is disproportionately committed against women and girls, men and boys are also victims of sexual assault, often while in detention or in the context of armed conflict. The Pabbo Camp study revealed that adolescent boys were at highest risk of sexual abuse/assault among males.

Legal issues in relation to GBV

Establishing women and children’s desks/police posts within IDP camps and towns must be acknowledged as a priority by NGOs, the UN, civil society and IDP representatives. NGOs should be ready to make every effort to support the capacity building of the police and the establishment of these posts.

Where there is no police presence, the issue of organized criminal involvement in ‘survival sex’ and so-called ‘transactional sex’ needs to be addressed by the camp leadership and an organized committee. Some *boda boda* or bicycle taxi drivers, hotel and bar owners, and female block leaders in camps, are known to be trafficking girls from camps to towns for sexual exploitation. Some parents are involved in pressing their children into ‘survival sex’ or so-called ‘transactional sex’.

There is a mistaken belief that forensic evidence is useless in conflict situations such as that in Northern Uganda. In fact, evidence can be kept indefinitely if properly handled, and used in trials many years after a crime has occurred. In the case of rape, although there may be few women willing to consider taking legal steps against

rapists at the moment, the collection of evidence now may become critical to a case later, when there is a better-functioning legal system

Medical personnel must be trained in the collection of evidence, and evidence must be stored indefinitely in a secure location. Rape evidence collection kits should not be used unless the victim understands the purpose and agrees to the process. Any evidence collected should be carefully handled, with a “chain of custody” sheet attached so that any transfer of evidence is recorded.²⁷

NGOs should seek permission to monitor trials in GBV cases, and human rights NGOs are advised to find out how allegations made against UPDF soldiers will be handled so that cases can be monitored for due process violations. This is relevant for all soldiers, but perhaps especially for members of LDUs who can disappear in detention without anyone realizing it.

5.2 Abduction and other forms of LRA attack

While the rate and severity of abductions and attacks across Acholiland vary over time, they continue nonetheless and these acts of violence wreak havoc on people’s ability to function. Moreover, regardless of the number of incidents, there is a sense of threat so pervasive that many people consider attack or possible abduction inevitable. As such, people are quite limited in where they can go and how they can carry on with their day-to-day activities.

In the Health and Mortality Survey among IDPs in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts, all reported abductions were among persons below 35 years and *46.4% involved the abduction of children below 15 years* [emphasis added]. Over 70% of abductions occurred outside camps. The study estimated that between January and July 2005, 1,168 persons had been abducted and had not yet returned to their homes.²⁸

Many attacks by the LRA, including rape, mutilation, abduction and murder occur when women and girls (sometimes boys and men) go to fetch water, collect firewood or garden. This is a well-known problem within the humanitarian community and has often been discussed in relation to the risk of rape in refugee and IDP camps. In Northern Uganda, though, very few NGOs have become engaged in trying to prevent rapes and other forms of attack by attempting to develop practical protection strategies at the camp level.

Formerly abducted children and adults are an important source of information about prevention and mitigation of harm by the LRA. For example, discussions with formerly abducted boys and men forced to become LRA rebels revealed that women who call out for help, especially to the UPDF, are often punished by mutilation. They

²⁷ Rape evidence kits may be available from Toronto Police Department in Canada free of charge. The department may also be willing to send a training officer with the kits. Instructions for their use are in English and French. Interested parties should contact the author for further information (Diane Paul, dipaul@charter.net)

²⁸ The Republic of Uganda Ministry of Health with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, World Food Programme, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and International Rescue Committee, *Health and mortality survey among internally displaced persons in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts, Northern Uganda*. July 2005.

also said that LRA soldiers are instructed to immediately kill anyone who resists abduction, with the exception of girls between 12 and 15 years of age.

One ex-LRA rebel who was abducted as a child and is now an adult said:

“Before we attacked any place, we planned the attack. Our goal was to abduct 12-15 year-old girls because they are HIV/AIDS free. We abducted 15-20 year-old adults first just to carry loot and then they were usually released...You just take the girls to the rear position. The number of abductees [taken during an attack] is not pre-determined; it just depends on the catch. LRA rebels are told to kill any girls who resist, but first you must try to subdue her and force her to submit by beating. If you beat her and she fails to submit, you kill her. She should just be killed then and there.”

Women and girls should be informed about what they could try to do if captured to protect themselves from mutilation or death – and to survive in the first instance. Although this is a very difficult subject to approach, knowing in advance that not resisting could save your life or prevent mutilation at the moment of capture is important. Women may then be able to consider how they might behave if attacked/abducted; the possibility then exists for them to think more clearly during an attack and make choices accordingly.

While terror may make it impossible to think clearly, some women are able to recall information even under extreme stress. Obviously it is every woman’s choice whether to fight, call for help, or submit, but she has a better chance of survival if she considers possible alternatives in advance.

If the willingness exists on the part of formerly abducted persons to discuss ideas about how to mitigate harm during an attack or prevent attacks, such discussions may be very fruitful (as learned during the mission for this report). Discussions with formerly abducted persons should not take place outside the proper setting, such as a receiving center, in order to protect them from identification as former LRA and possible retaliation.

Formerly abducted persons should not be asked questions about their own actions outside confidential individual or group counselling sessions, but could be encouraged to share information about the tactics the LRA uses and how women might protect themselves while in those settings. It is important to consult both male and female formerly abducted persons about protection issues, since their perspectives will be different.

Interviews conducted with persons in FAC centers for this report revealed that most were not only willing but were very motivated to share information both about LRA tactics and possible protection measures.

5.3 Land and Property Rights

Land and property rights in Uganda are complex, particularly in relation to the balance between communal and individual lands, and individual use rights to communal lands. The definitive work on land and displacement in Northern Uganda

is *Land Matters in Displacement: The Importance of Land Rights in Acholiland and What Threatens Them*, written by Judy Adoko and Simon Levine for the Land and Equity Movement in Uganda, published by Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) in December 2004.²⁹

That paper reveals, among other things:

- Contrary to the widespread belief that most land in Acholiland is communally owned, most families own their farmland at either the extended family or nuclear family level.
- Land ownership is under threat from a variety of sources: when peace comes and return begins, land-grabbing will become a major concern. The appropriation of land for hunting or grazing rights by one's own tribe can occur, or the government could expropriate land for private investment, or family members, neighbours and/or others could try to take advantage of widows or orphans and take their land.
- People do not know their rights and many would be afraid to claim them if they did. There are laws for the protection of land rights, but there is no clear way to implement them because access to the justice system is so limited and difficult.
- People in Gulu recognize that they would be susceptible to the temptation to sell their most valuable resource - their land - due to extreme poverty, while the people of Kitgum and Pader do not seem to have the same level of self-knowledge.
- There are two parallel legal/judicial systems in place: those of customary tenure and of state administration. The Government of Uganda has failed to ensure that the laws passed by parliament are upheld.³⁰

Land and Food Security

The lack of access to land for growing food and raising livestock is one of the primary contributors to the extremely poor living conditions that the people of Northern Uganda endure. This lack of access is caused by insecurity (arising from ongoing attacks by the LRA and the Ugandan military's counterinsurgency campaign) and the government's restrictive policies on movement outside IDP camps.

The Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU) has pointed out, based on demonstrated land projects in the North, that "if providing security for IDPs to farm is made a priority, then their food security can be improved without any other assistance."

"The containment of the Acholi people in camps is depriving them of access to land for farming and other basic necessities, and is denying them the possibility of income from selling their labor. Access to land is the single most serious constraint to productive activity in the camps and

²⁹ CSOPNU's "Land Matters in Displacement: The Importance of Land Rights in Acholiland and What Threatens Them" (December 2004) should be mandatory reading for all NGO country directors and field office managers. The paper provides an excellent analysis of potential land issues upon return and in addition provides critical information about agricultural projects in current IDP camps

³⁰ See pgs. 57-58 of the report. Copies are available from LEMU, Tel. 077 856 212, Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU), Tel. 041 258 568/9, or contact the author by e-mail: dipaul@charter.net

any proposed food security intervention has to recognize this in its analysis and rationale. Interventions which claim to support agricultural and livestock production, without addressing access to land, risk the charge that they are more about a demonstration of goodwill and a desire to help than a serious attempt at achieving actual impact.”³¹

LEMU has also noted that the provision of security by the Ugandan military for the land projects mentioned above allowed them success, but that army protection was withdrawn the moment formal projects ended. In at least one instance (in Palenga) crops could not be harvested because project funding ended beforehand —and in any case, access to the land involved was impossible because the army had imposed a 1km “safe distance” movement restriction.³²

IDPs who violate restrictions in accessing land risk attack by both the LRA and by the UPDF. Women risk sexual assault by rogue UPDF soldiers whenever they leave the camp or visit the perimeter, and everyone risks beatings or even killing by the UPDF if they violate zonal restrictions or attempt to access agricultural land.

While some UPDF soldiers provide protection for IDPs while tending their crops as a matter of course, others take a portion of harvested food as a form of payment. Some local people also take part of crops as their payment for IDPs’ use of the land, or simply steal them.

Many IDPs complain that they have rented land to grow crops only to see them destroyed without compensation by the landowners’ cattle. In such a situation, they lose all the money invested in renting the land, plus any spent on inputs, along with their wasted toil.

The LEMU study of land rights and issues revealed that neither seeds nor tools were in short supply in camps, and that seeds could be acquired in direct exchange for labor. The evidence suggests that the only benefit of distributing seeds is the cash benefit of selling them, which may be useful in some cases but does not benefit many people greatly in the long term.

Most importantly, supplying seeds does nothing to solve the real problem: lack of access to land. And the targeting of seed distributions sometimes makes no sense. In one camp, IDPs had to have a proper hut in order to qualify for seeds: as a result, the only ones who really needed the seeds, the newly displaced, did not get them because they did not have any huts yet.³³

In some areas, such as Lira municipality, IDPs use of land for agriculture is creating serious problems with the host community due to the loss of trees and other damage to the environment. IDPs report that they are resented, called names and beaten by local people. On the other hand, local residents do, by and large, recognize their neighbors’ predicament and have been very generous with their land and resources— not that the authorities gave them any say in the matter.

³¹ Ibid., p. 57.

³² Ibid., p. 42.

³³ Ibid., p. 39.

No one expected the conflict to drag on for so long and IDP populations have worn out their welcome in some locations. New ways of helping IDPs to demonstrate their appreciation to the local community, and of negotiating fair access to land, must be explored.

Many IDPs fear they will lose their own land, or have already lost it, and they will find they have no land when they try to return home. Some people suspect the government or the army of a large-scale scheme to steal their land for agro-commercial projects, though the LEMU report points out that most vacated land is not being used at all.

Some individuals (including UPDF commanders) have appropriated land and the development of agro-commercial projects that violate IDP land rights does represent a danger. However, the LEMU/CSOPNU report indicates that the more immediate threats to land rights involve relatives taking land from widows and orphans, the encroachment of sub-county offices on private land (especially in Pader District) as well as the mistaken belief of many civilians that land used by the government for trading centers, etc., becomes public land so that encroachments cannot be challenged.³⁴

Legal Issues in Relation to Land and Property Matters

More NGOs are needed to take up land rights cases directly on behalf of clients due to lack of access to the legal system. This will hopefully result in the establishment of precedents that will encourage others to stand up for their rights.

The specific groups of people in need of assistance may include: people renting land in camps who have been cheated; women and children needing assistance in claiming land after return; local lawyers requesting assistance in preparing briefs; the owners of camp lands requesting compensation for damages to property.

The denial of inheritance rights for women is a culturally ingrained practice that will be difficult to address. Women must be convinced of their right to land. Music, dance and celebrations around land rights can be used to get messages across.

In one camp, though, during a celebration of International Women's Day, no one had to inform women about their rights. They sang, "It is because of the right to cultivate that we survive and the reason why we are here." No NGO had organized this activity, but the women were clear about their rights and what they wanted. They addressed their songs to elected officials, demanding change, which was heartening.

5.4 Child Soldiers: Protection and Reintegration

The problem of child soldiers has not been comprehensively addressed by the Ugandan government, military, UN or NGOs. There have been great strides to increase military sensitization in the process of demobilization and NGOs focusing on reintegration aspects, but the response remains inadequate.

Moreover, current trends of recruitment into local defense units (LDUs) are disconcerting. The "Arrow Boys," "Rhinos," and "Frontier Guards" as they are

³⁴Ibid., p. 17-18.

known according to district are used as the front line in defense of the camps and its perimeters, a role they are familiar with from their time spent with the LRA. On both sides, it's the children that are often forced to the front, unarmed, to serve as a shield for the adult and higher-ranking soldiers.

When formerly abducted children are captured by or surrender to the UPDF, or escape from the LRA, they are supposed to be taken to a Child Protection Unit (CPU), from which - by agreement between UNICEF and the UPDF - they are supposed to be released to a centre for formerly abducted children within two days. The CPUs are located in each conflict-affected district.

Yet, reliable sources claim that some children are held back for interrogation or kept as child soldiers. A review of transit centre records over the previous six months in one district revealed a wide variation: many children were turned over to the civilian transit centre within the two days, many were not and some were held by the military for weeks – and, in some cases, months.

It was also learned that some children who had arrived at the CPU in Kitgum during the field mission for this report were transferred to the Rachele Centre for FACs in Lira despite their homes being in Kitgum District. CPU staff confirmed this. Reports were received from several persons in other districts that they had heard of children being transferred to there.

The transfer of children from their home districts to the Rachele Centre means that their family members are unable to visit them and could mean a much longer period before reunification. One child at the Kichwa Centre for FACs in Kitgum said he had spent weeks in Rachele and was then put on a bus alone to travel to Kitgum, where no one met him. He found his way to the Kichwa Centre on his own. “Now I will have to go through all this again before I find my family”, he complained.

The reason for the transfers to the Rachele Centre is unclear. It may be that Rachele is seen as a superior centre because it provides the children with better reintegration packages, which are reportedly causing resentment among reintegrated youth and within communities for what is perceived to be unfair assistance to ex-LRA soldiers. In any case, unnecessary transfers to Rachele mean that children who could be reunited with their families immediately in their home districts are being denied this opportunity.

It is important to ask children how long they spent with the UPDF and how long they were held at the CPU. This information should be recorded as part of the intake interview.

In one location, an NGO program officer visits the CPU often, sometimes several times a day, to discuss cases of new child ex-soldiers waiting for entry into the centre for formerly abducted children. His presence has been well accepted and he has been able to intervene in a few cases of child soldiers seen in the UPDF barracks, successfully convincing the UPDF to demobilize them. This person has obviously gained the trust of the UPDF soldiers and commanders, is non-threatening and has, in a sense, become ‘invisible’ to them, enabling him to intervene in a positive and unexpected way to protect children not directly under his care.

There is no knowledge about how many children escape from the LRA or are released but do not pass through the UPDF-run Child Protection Units, which are the last stop of FACs who have escaped from the LRA and have surrendered to or were captured by UPDF troops before their release to transit centres. It is suspected that some night commuters may be children who have left the LRA but are unsure how to get home.

Some LDU members are reportedly taken by the UPDF to Gulu and are not seen again. The UPDF is known to have deployed members of LDUs elsewhere in the country, but does not keep records of LDU members and does not regard them as regular troops, despite appearing to control their movement.

Tracing, Family Reunification and Psychosocial Work with Formerly Abducted Children and Adults, and their Families

Following a period of counselling and readjustment at a transit centre (not meant to be more than a few weeks, or at most months), children are supposed to be reunited with their families and then followed by social workers for a period of time at the community level to make sure that they are readjusting.

In reality, however, many FACs are not reunited with their families and reintegrated into their communities as successfully as previously believed, or as presented by some FAC centres. In fact, relatively few families have received adequate follow-up.

This is not meant to malign the very challenging and important work the centres are doing. There are many obstacles to successful reintegration, perhaps chief among them the continuing insecurity and the problems this poses for access and transportation.

Even so, there have been a number of cases of negligence. For example, some children have simply been placed on buses and sent to their home districts without any assistance to call upon once they reach their destinations.

Fortunately, UNICEF has announced that it will work closely with the Ugandan Red Cross on family reunification. The concept involves the provision of tracing services by the Ugandan Red Cross with the actual reunification overseen by UNICEF. It would be useful for NGOs to monitor family tracing and reunification cases, and to report any difficulties to UNICEF.

Reintegration

Vocational training for FACs and adults, integrating them with the rest of the population into programs with others of their age group, is a very important endeavor for an NGO partnership.

Youth clubs, such as those run by IRC, are very important for FACs' reintegration. Such clubs are very important to engage teens who are otherwise unoccupied and may be tempted to join LDUs or the UPDF for money, companionship and a sense of belonging, or because they have grown accustomed to life as a soldier. FACs, especially those experiencing difficulty reintegrating, are at especially high risk of voluntary recruitment.

Youth leaders need to be trained to watch for signs of problems and to prevent teasing, harassment and any form of violence by or against FACs.

According to many observers, child mothers of children fathered by LRA commanders do not appear to have bonding or relationship problems with their infants or young children. Even so, they would benefit from early childhood development classes and discussions, and the companionship they would provide.

5.5 The Destruction of Community and Family Norms

“In the old days if there was defilement of a girl the man would pay a fine. Now nothing happens. In the past certain things couldn’t happen. I don’t know about the culture now—all kinds of funny things happen. The younger children don’t show respect for elders the way they used to.”

- a female elder living in Ireda IDP Camp, Lira District

The haphazard and coerced movement of nearly the entire population of Northern Uganda into IDP camps has been followed by years of violence and the continued neglect of basic human needs. Extended families were separated upon entry into the camps and people ended up living next to people they did not know. Family and community structures critical to support for family members were broken down due to physical separation and the inability to visit due to insecurity. Traditional methods of resolving disputes and dealing with other matters fell by the wayside.

Despite government promises of protection for the camps, LRA attacks are unrelenting, and the level of fear of LRA attacks remains so high that people cling together: huts are built so close to one another that deadly fires in some camps and increased susceptibility to disease have resulted in some camps.

Past experience has taught that the psychological effect of unrelenting fear, bouts of acute terror and the considerable stresses of camp life is traumatic stress. Since stress is cumulative, the coping skills of most people erode rather than recover under continuing stressful conditions, with mental and physical health negatively affected.

The social effects of these conditions include the breakdown of communal structures and social norms, and the exhaustion of normal protective mechanisms within the community and family. This was poignantly demonstrated during an interview at one camp where a group of mothers in clear psychological distress described sending their young daughters to have sex with businessmen in town for 500 shillings (equivalent to about US 27 cents) so their families could eat.

Elders in four different camps expressed deep concern about what they perceive as loss of authority of parents over their children (“all these children just run around all day long”, “parents don’t know what their children are doing” etc), the failure of fathers to take responsibility for their families due to heavy drinking, and a lack of respect for elders despite its traditional importance in Acholi culture.

Elders bemoaned the loss of traditional practices and said they felt isolated from their children and grandchildren, having lost the means to communicate in traditional ways.

Music, dance and evening campfires are the traditional methods of passing knowledge between generations, but lack of time (due to time needed to gather basic needs, camp curfews and fear of fire) now prevent many of these activities. Elders believe the loss of this time with their family and other clan members is very relevant to the breakdown of tradition and normative behavior.

Many men in the camps feel useless, humiliated and depressed since they are unable to protect or support their families. They no longer have the possessions that defined manhood and status in the society (livestock and land) and cannot provide sufficient food for their children. The role of father seems almost irrelevant: it was not addressed in a single interview for this report.

Men are often not included in humanitarian programming, and programming is often not family-oriented. This is detrimental to men's self-esteem, family functioning and relationships. A sense of helplessness, anger and fear has led many to drinking and domestic violence. Some have left their families to "go live in town", often with another wife or to frequent prostitutes; some have disappeared altogether. Suicide rates are said to be high, but reliable rates are hard to find.

Before the war, widowed women were looked after within the clan structure, with men in the village instructed to build huts for them. Now widows must pay money or beer to men to build their huts. Some have no money and resort to offering sex for building services.

Women work under enormous stress and fear to provide food and water for their children and other household members, including some men who demand food and water but do little to help with time-consuming daily tasks.

Many husbands do work in the family garden plots (if available) but in the evening drink beer - prepared by the widows who depend on the sale of beer as their only source of income - and, once drunk, become abusive. This vicious cycle often repeats itself daily.

Some men seek sex from other women in the camp or in town, and may become infected with HIV/AIDs, later spreading the virus to their wives. Women and teenagers may also engage in promiscuous behavior, at least partly as an escape from the harsh reality of camp life.

Many if not most camps were set up without proper play and schooling areas for children, adequate areas where health, counselling and other services could be provided, or areas where traditional music and dance can be performed - an activity that is all the more important due to the breakdown of community.

5.6 Night Commuting

Abductions and other attacks on civilians have led to a phenomenon unique to Northern Uganda referred to as "night commuting," where tens of thousands of children and other displaced people in camps within reach of major towns walk anywhere from two to 10 kilometres to town every night to sleep, due to fear of attacks by the LRA.

This practice developed as a form of self-protection but has many negative effects, including exposing young children to additional abuses and exploitation, and decreasing the precious little time they have to spend with their families in normal family activities. Children are often exhausted and do not have time for rest, play or study.

UNICEF has expressed concern about the effect of night commuting on families, which is an important protection issue. Assessments urgently need to focus on families and the reasons why children are night commuting.

In spring 2005, the UN agency released information that the number of child night commuters had increased by 10,000 as of late April that year, amid renewed fighting and abductions. That brought the number of confirmed night commuters to some 40,000.

During the field mission for this study, it was observed that many children travel alone or with other children, but with no adult accompaniment. Many children were observed arriving at shelters well after dark. Many women were seen commuting and also some men, including NGO staff members, as observed in Kitgum. Sometimes whole families night-commute, as was discovered at the Martyr's School shelter in Gulu.

In one camp near Kitgum town, one half of the camp population night-commutes and the other half does not. It is important that humanitarian agencies discover whether 50% of the people feel secure enough to sleep in the camp or are, perhaps, tired of the nightly effort and have given themselves up to their fates.

Conditions for night commuters also remain difficult at their destinations. At the Government Hospital grounds in Kitgum, for example, there was almost no room to walk between commuters trying to sleep on the ground.

For many people, especially young girls, there may be more risk in night commuting than in staying in camps due to the risk of sexual violence and exploitation by UPDF soldiers, businessmen and others, and physical abuse by other IDPs, often boys. Many of the girls interviewed for this study complained of physical abuse, teasing and bullying by boys on the way to the shelters.

For others, such as street children or children from child-headed households, conditions may be better in the shelters than they are elsewhere, despite the fact that no food is provided. Some children may be commuting to escape physical or sexual abuse. One nine-year-old girl interviewed for this report said her grandmother had thrown her out of home for "stealing a blanket."

Other night commuters are FACs who have escaped from the LRA but do not want to go to an FAC center, have been rejected by their families or are unaware of where to go for assistance.

A May 2004 study by Save the Children revealed that just 24% of night commuter children lived in a home with two parents. When asked who made the decision about whether or not to commute, 25% of the children said they had made the decision

themselves³⁵ - a possible indicator of a lack of parental engagement, a serious symptom of the breakdown of families.

Life in the camps is one of constant stress, fear and extremely poor living conditions. Parents, including many single parents, are often exhausted by the effort to survive. They may also be experiencing symptoms of traumatic stress, which can cause feelings of hopelessness and detachment, anger and depression.

The Save the Children study found that 27% of children reported experiencing abuse at home, and that those living with extended family members experienced 10% more abuse. "The often-praised African tradition of taking care of each other in an extended family is breaking down," it concluded. Children also reported being frequently abused by neighbors. Many mentioned a lack of food or the denial of food by caretakers.³⁶ Night commuter children interviewed for this report also mentioned a lack of food.

Many parents believe that night commuting is absolutely necessary for the safety of their children and insist that the children commute. Most children (82%) report that they would no longer want to night commute/come to the shelters if the war ended.³⁷

Girls who have babies tend not to commute. Furthermore, girls above the age of 13 or 14 may not commute due to the societal belief that they are no longer children. The *Sleepless in Gulu* study revealed that most shelters (in 2004) did not allow young mothers to stay.³⁸

Although sleeping and shelter conditions for night commuters have greatly improved due to the efforts of NGOs and members of civil society (including churches, schools and hospitals), many children and adults still do not have blankets or mats and were observed to be sleeping on the bare ground.

However, several NGO representatives raised concerns about making night commuting and FAC services too attractive, thereby encouraging further disintegration of family coping mechanisms.

Commuting has a negative effect on education in the camps due to lack of time for studying, inability to carry books long distances, late arrival at school after walking from shelters, etc.³⁹ For this reason, it's important to have early bedtimes at shelters to enable early rising.

The positive effect of shelter activities, such as classes and information sessions on HIV/AIDS, also needs to be weighed against the need for rest. Primary school children require about 10 hours of sleep under normal conditions, middle school

³⁵ Falk, Lehnart, Lenz, Jessica and Okuma, Patrick, *Sleepless in Gulu: A Study of the Dynamics behind the Child Night Commuting Phenomenon in Gulu, Uganda*, Save the Children in Uganda, May 2004, p. 23.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³⁹ *Sleepless in Gulu*, p. 53.

children about 9 hours and adolescents at least eight hours. Many night commuter children are not getting enough sleep, which is detrimental to learning and health.

Although time is limited because people are tired from walking and need their sleep, there may be time to engage elders in storytelling, benefiting both them and the children. Elders traditionally used *wang oo* (storytelling and chat around the campfire) for passing on culture, traditional practices and social mores.

5.7 Abuses by the UPDF and allied militias

Human Rights Watch and other organizations have reported serious human rights violations abuses of displaced people by the UPDF and allied local defence forces and militias, including beatings, rape, torture and even murder.

“We still have the same problems as three years ago with the UPDF beating people for going to their farms or being out past curfew,” an international human rights researcher told the interviewer for this report. “Rape is a serious matter... a [UPDF] battalion in Gulu area is beating people every day for going to their gardens; one old man was beaten to death for going to the latrine at night.”

“There are daily protection threats,” the director of a major NGO reported. IDPs’ “most immediate fears... relate to the threat presented not by the LRA, but by the UPDF, fellow IDPs and the LDUs.”

Reports of the alleged killing of at least five civilians by UPDF forces were received during the mission for this report alone. None appeared to have been properly investigated and no arrests had been made.

Beatings of IDPs by UPDF soldiers are commonplace in and around the camps, according to IDPs, NGO and UN workers, and other sources. Beatings are often committed for curfew violations.

“We feel insecure at night”, said a female night commuter in Kitgum town, “because if we come a bit late we might meet UPDF soldiers. Some might beat you, some might just ask you [why you’re late]; some might do nothing. It depends on the individual.”

“Beatings by the UPDF are ever there. They are always happening,” a government official told the interviewer. “One man was trying to tune his radio and the soldiers grabbed his radio. They fought but the man was not injured. The man said he would report the incident. Beatings that have required medical attention are settled.”⁴⁰

Forced labor, involving the UPDF forcing civilians to cut grass along the roadways, seemed to be occurring less frequently at the time of writing but may recur. The combined advocacy efforts of the UN and NGOs seemed to be effective when focused on this one problem. The same approach could be tried for other issues, starting perhaps with the problem of sexual assault.

⁴⁰ Location withheld due to concern about retaliation.

5.8 Legal and judicial issues

As things stand in Northern Uganda, the perpetrators of violent crimes - almost without exception - enjoy impunity for their actions. There is minimal redress available for victims through legal channels.

The number of judges and lawyers across Acholiland are few in number. Even in attempts to bring justice to the people through a mobile court service, their sittings are so few and far between that people often try to settle the matter through traditional means or give up altogether.

When the police are involved in an alleged crime, suspected perpetrators can be arrested and placed in prison for up to one year without a trial, according to Ugandan law. In rare circumstances when cases are tried, executions can result without fair trial or due process. In most cases there is neither investigation nor prosecution, neither justice nor judgement.

5.9 Return and Reintegration

“Regarding return, there is a constant message from IDPs that if Kony is still alive with just 10 men they will not go back home.”

- UNICEF field officer

The UN Inter-Agency Internal Displacement Division sent a mission to Uganda in early 2005 to follow up on a previous mission and to assist in planning for the return and resettlement of displaced people. The resulting “Draft Framework for the Return or Resettlement and Reintegration of IDPs in Northern Uganda” is useful in describing various planning scenarios, despite the uncertain possibility of any imminent return. The draft framework, which contains numerous valuable recommendations, is very thorough and those who need greater detail than is provided in this section are referred to it.⁴¹

The Division made another trip to Uganda in May 2005 and assisted in the development of a Return Task Force to finalize the framework. The mission attempted to evaluate the degree that IDPs feel pressured by authorities to return home. Very few people reported feeling such pressure, but - almost to a person - IDPs insisted they would not return home until Joseph Kony was accounted for. Even if every other LRA rebel walked out of the bush, they said, they would still not return.

“The politicians are telling us to go home — we don’t feel secure enough to return [but] no one is really pressuring us to go”, said a woman elder in Erute Camp in Lira. Asked what would be needed to return, she said: “Security.”

There have been returns in Lira to the sub-county level, but many IDPs remain fearful of security problems. As long as the LRA remains active, the North will remain unstable and return may be disrupted.

⁴¹ The “Draft Framework for the Return or Resettlement and Reintegration of IDPs in Northern Uganda” was completed in Kampala in February 2005. It is available through the Inter-Agency Internal Displacement Division.

Once the issues of the LRA's cessation of operations – and Joseph Kony's whereabouts – are eventually resolved and IDPs feel secure, it is anticipated that the vast majority of them will spontaneously return home. They will be anxious to reclaim their land and to await the return of those members of their families who have been abducted.

Some people, especially younger men and women, may choose to remain in the towns. Some IDPs without families will need assistance to return. Nearly all families will need return/ resettlement packages of temporary housing material, such as plastic sheeting and basic tools, food packages and non-food items, such as seeds and tools. UNOCHA Internal Displacement Division's report on return and resettlement is helpful in laying out various scenarios and determining various courses of action that will be needed in the future.

5.10 Recommendations on Additional Protection Challenges

In relation to Gender-Based Violence, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Identify and implement strategies at IDP camp level to:
 - o Prevent the abduction of girls and women inside and outside IDP camps.
 - o Prevent the rape/sexual assault of girls and women who go into the bush for water, firewood or other reasons
 - o Protect girls/women within camps during attacks, through early warning systems to alert camp residents to attacks, for example, or immediate communication with UPDF/LDU units, ICRC and the UN when attacks occur
 - Develop, as a priority, medical responses to GBV that include immediate and appropriate medical care in an atmosphere of respect. Medical responses should include the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy prevention for survivors of rape and sexual exploitation, and post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV/AIDS.
 - Build capacity within Ugandan NGOs, government systems and camp structures to work with IDPs in developing self-protection strategies.
 - Work to establish “night patrols” in all camps where there are reports of sexual attacks or domestic violence after dark.
 - Advocate for special police units (such as women and children's desks), to include female police officers, within IDP camps and in police stations in towns to receive reports and investigate crimes. Police posts in IDP camps should be linked to psychosocial support programs and provide information to the public about GBV and the law.
 - Develop psychosocial support programs to assist survivors of sexual violence and exploitation in ways that do not stigmatize survivors, that maintain confidentiality, and that provide information and referral to both survivors and the general community.
 - Develop community awareness campaigns to emphasise the consequences of sexual assault and abuse, and the need to

protect children against sexual abuse. They should emphasize the vulnerability of children and communities' responsibility to prevent abuse and exploitation.

- Provide family counselling and mediation to help families understand the plight of GBV survivors.

On the issue of domestic violence,

- NGOs should work on raising awareness among male adults and adolescents, in particular, of the human rights aspects and negative effects of domestic violence for the entire population.
- Traditional means of resolving domestic disputes and stopping domestic violence should be encouraged, while ensuring that the rights of the victim/survivor are respected.
- A public awareness campaign should be put in place on the linkage between alcoholism and domestic violence.

On avoiding stigmatization and ensuring confidentiality,

- NGOs and the UN should agree on an approach to GBV that avoids drawing attention to survivors but ensures that they know where to go to seek and receive help. The creation of Centres for Women and Girls, offering a variety of activities and support services, is one way to approach GBV in a setting that will not stigmatize survivors.
- All staff and paraprofessionals should sign a confidentiality agreement, and should be asked to explain to the field program manager what it means. All persons referred to services should be assured of confidentiality. Information about individual victims or families should be shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- NGOs should undertake or encourage information campaigns (using posters and radio programs, for example) to inform the public of the right of all people to be free of sexual violence. Key messages should be developed based on site-specific information and assessments. Due care should be taken to ensure that there are systems in place to assist people who may present for help as a result.
- NGOs should promote the adoption of effective psychosocial, medical and legal responses to GBV as soon as possible. Although most people are unlikely to report sexual violence to the authorities because of mistrust, it is important to work toward a legal response and frame the problem as that of a perpetrator committing a crime rather than a woman or girl being shamed or designated a "loser", as was noted in Pabbo IDP Camp.
- GBV programs should ensure that boys and men, as well as women and girls, are aware of where they can report sexual assault and obtain support and assistance.
- Humanitarian agencies and workers should use the term 'survival sex' rather than 'transactional sex' (which implies some equal exchange) when sexual acts are engaged in solely as a matter of obtaining food or other basic needs.
- Those working in GBV programs should advocate change in Ugandan law to amend the charge of 'defilement', which implies a victim/survivor of GBV has somehow been "ruined" and thus carries an inherent stigma.

On the issue of legal matters arising in tackling GBV, NGOs working in the area of GBV and/or legal reform in Northern Uganda should:

- Advocate that rape be defined according to the Ugandan penal code and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).⁴²
- Advocate to have the term ‘defilement’ changed to a term or terms that are descriptive of the criminal act of an adult having sex with a minor, rather than a word with such negative connotations.
- Raise public awareness of the law around the issues of rape and ‘defilement’, because interviews with IDPs indicated that there is not a common understanding of these terms.
- Seek special measures, such as video link-ups or ‘closed-door’ trials, to protect victims/survivors of GBV or sexual violence from traumatic stress while testifying. Survivor witnesses should be permitted to have witness advocates accompany them to court.
- Explore the legality of witnesses testifying as to a GBV victim’s prior sexual history, or private conversations with a counsellor. If there is no law prohibiting this, they should press to have such laws brought to the legislature as soon as possible.
- Push for police and medical staff to be trained in the proper collection of evidence in rape cases.
- Focus all medico-legal GBV protocols on the development of reporting mechanisms that preserve confidentiality and provide for the immediate medical care of victims.
- Approach donors about financial support for GBV-related work in the areas of police training and police deployment in IDP camps, recruitment of female police officer and, construction of suitable police facilities (to include private interviewing rooms) within police stations in towns and police facilities in IDP camps.

Human rights NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Consider collecting evidence now for the potential prosecution of GBV cases in the future.

On the issue of participatory approaches to GBV programming, NGOs working in the area of GBV in Northern Uganda should:

- Actively involve IDP women in the development, implementation and evaluation of GBV programs. Focus groups should be held with women and adolescent girls to develop ideas for pilot programs that can then be developed, based on lessons learned, into permanent programs that will be relevant during and after return.
- Hold focus groups with men on GBV programming to reveal attitudes about GBV that may help in making decisions about the focus of programs. Such groups could help build support for the protection of women and girls, as well as boys and men.

⁴²The ICC defines rape as follows: “‘The perpetrator invaded the body of a person [note gender neutral definition] by conduct resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the body of the victim or of the perpetrator with a sexual organ or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with *any object or any other part of the body* [emphasis added].” (Section 7 (1) (g) - 1)

- Take special care in selecting program leaders, since some IDP camp residents, including some block leaders, are reported by IDP women to be involved in local prostitution/ trafficking rings.

On the issue of training for GBV programming, NGOs working in the area of GBV in Northern Uganda should:

- Work to ensure that appropriate medical care is available to all survivors of GBV. This will require training government health care staff in hospitals and clinics, and volunteer health care workers, in proper protocols for the examination and treatment of victims.
- Hire professional staff to lead/manage GBV programs on the basis of strong experience in GBV programming in a conflict environment, good familiarity with major guidelines on the management of GBV in conflict settings, and being up to date on all GBV-related research relevant to Northern Uganda.⁴³
- Have program managers attend periodic refresher courses and conferences to keep up to date with best practice in addressing GBV.
- Provide paraprofessional staff with adequate training to ensure proper treatment of victims, including respect for their privacy and dignity. (Some programs have provided only a few hours of training, which is clearly insufficient.)
- Train medical staff to attend to the immediate health needs of patients as a priority. Any physical injuries should be treated according to WHO protocols for the clinical management of survivors, including emergency contraceptives and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). Such treatment, which could help prevent unwanted pregnancy in girls and women, and significantly lower the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission, should be available to every survivor of rape.
- Find out what is taught on GBV and Ugandan law at the police academy in order to determine what amount and quality of GBV training is offered. NGOs should push for police training to include information about the consequences of GBV for survivors.
- Develop protocols for police protocols, including a Code of Conduct, on the management of GBV cases.
- Advocate for the mandatory training of police in GBV where experts can provide such training.
- Encourage mandatory GBV training for military commanders. NGOs should request that the UN Humanitarian Coordinator advocate this with the Ugandan government.
- Advocate that basic military training of all troops should include clear directives on the treatment of women and girls, and emphasize that GBV will not be tolerated. NGOs should request that the UN Humanitarian Coordinator follow up on this with the Ugandan government.
- Offer training to the military in their areas of operation.

⁴³ Including and especially: 1) IASC, “Guidelines on Gender Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence in Emergencies,” September 2005. http://www.rhrc.org/pdf/GBV_guidelines_Eng_09_13_05.pdf ; and (2) UNHCR, “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response,” UNHCR, 2003. Additional important guidelines are noted in Section 5.1.16 of this report on GBV Resources.

On the issue of medical care and GBV,

- The Government of Uganda should provide training for medical staff in GBV programming, with support from WHO and other UN agencies, including UNFPA. NGOs with special expertise can play a supportive role through the provision of training on GBV where gaps exist and resources permit.
- Standard operating procedures should be developed for the treatment of GBV survivors. Confidentiality of medical records must be stressed.
- “Appropriate medical care” should include the treatment of STIs, administration of post-exposure prophylaxis when indicated, and the offer of emergency contraception.
- UNFPA should provide Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP) GBV sub-kits to hospitals and clinics in Northern Uganda.⁴⁴
- Information about the availability and type of medical services for GBV survivors should be widely distributed.

On the issue of Cooperation on GBV Programming, NGOs working in the area of GBV in Northern Uganda should:

- Strive to provide extensive training for GBV staff, and share training resources and opportunities. Whenever possible, NGOs should engage persons with experience and expertise from other conflict situations to work in Northern Uganda as advisers. NGOs might also share the cost of hiring a GBV adviser.
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of GBV-related material in Codes of Conduct.
- Agree to avoid competition for staff, and agree to work together on the development of training, equal compensation for staff, and comparable incentives for volunteers, security standards, etc.
- Meet regularly, in working on GBV in Northern Uganda at national, regional or district level, to share program ideas and discuss challenges.

On the issue of Rape and Sexual Abuses by the Ugandan army, NGOs working in the area of GBV in Northern Uganda should:

- Consider requesting President Yoweri Museveni to broadcast a radio address to the UPDF condemning sexual violence and abuse by troops, asking that commanding officers read a statement over the radio apologizing for the misbehaviour of soldiers, and providing instructions for anyone who wishes to make complaints.
- Advocate for a *démarche* by diplomatic missions to the Government of Uganda to stop UPDF violence and sexual abuses, especially against women, through direct orders by commanders, through both military and public channels, so that all soldiers are well aware of such orders.

⁴⁴ The co-ordination and implementation of MISP requires identification of a lead agency and a reproductive health coordinator. The MISP includes 12 sub-kits, which can be ordered separately from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). These sub-kits contain pre-packaged materials and supplies to suit the needs of the targeted population. The sub-kits relevant to GBV include GBV training and administration material as well as information on condom use; post-rape, oral and injectable contraception and the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. It should be noted, however, that the lack of primary health care services may render the MISP kits useless or may invoke risk due to improper use.

- Consider approaching major donors to Uganda about the conditionality of military and development aid, based on the response of the government - and the UPDF, in particular -to allegations of human rights violations (particularly GBV) against civilians in the North.
- Ask the US Embassy what measures have been taken to ensure that the 70 new Toyota pick-up trucks and other “non-lethal” military assistance provided to the UPDF is being used to protect civilians. (The US government announced that the purpose of the vehicles was to assist in patrolling areas around the camps for the protection of civilians.)
- Strongly discourage IDPs, especially women and girls, from going into the bush alone or in small groups for water, wood or other reasons. Alternatives must be explored, such as moving in larger groups and working with the UN and NGOs to obtain more adequate protection by (and from) the UPDF.

In relation to Abductions and other forms of LRA attack, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Distribute UNHCR’s Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women and the fact sheets available in the new IASC “Guidelines on Gender Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence in Emergencies” to all NGO staff members working in GBV programs, water/sanitation, health and shelter.
- Share and discuss these guidelines with IDP women in focus groups. The guidelines can be streamlined or simplified as necessary.⁴⁵
- Develop and distribute information about the rights of children and the need for girls and women to practise self-protection methods. This could be done in IDP camps using flyers, schools, radio or loudspeaker announcements, etc.
- Develop simple, short messages to teach children about personal safety and to remind people to take precautions for themselves and others. Messages appropriate to the situation can be developed and repeated often. Such messages might include: “Children should be protected from sexual abuse!” or “Remember, never go alone to collect water or firewood—there is more safety in groups!” or “Girls, keep safe! Stay with friends and near adults when you are walking!”

In relation to Land and Property Rights, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Request LEMU to develop a basic course for humanitarian aid workers that provides the most pertinent information on the 1998 Land Act and focuses on specific activities that humanitarians can undertake to support IDPs in understanding and protecting land rights. An approach should be developed that permits NGOs without legal experience to provide services that complement those of NGOs with legal knowledge and experience.
- Organize for LEMU and other organizations working on land rights to hold a special meeting with the donor community to highlight land issues and to

⁴⁵ The UNCHR guidelines can be found at www.unhcr.ch. The IASC guidelines can be reviewed/downloaded from http://www.rhrc.org/pdf/GBV_guidelines_Eng_09_13_05.pdf.

emphasize the importance of donor support for land rights projects. The UN should support this.⁴⁶

- Consult with LEMU and others with land rights expertise about advocacy for capacity-building of government land rights agencies, such as District Land Boards, District Land Tribunals (which had never heard any cases in Acholiland as of the end of 2004), District Registrar of Titles (there were no Registrars in any of the districts in Northern Uganda at the end of 2004), Area Land Committees (non-existent as of the end of 2004), etc.⁴⁷
- Help disseminate information about IDPs and land rights to IDPs
- Advocate with the government for clarification of land law
- Support local authorities in learning more about land law
- Assist IDPs in forming land rights committees
- Accompany IDP representative delegations to meetings with public officials about land rights
- Ensure that efforts are focused on the most vulnerable/most marginalized.
- Consider opposing, at LEMU's suggestion, the Government of Uganda's proposed compulsory acquisition of land for investment and the inclusion of traditional institutions in land management. NGOs could focus on explaining the humanitarian consequences of these actions for IDPs and war-affected persons, especially women and children.
- Advocate the support of LEMU's activities in Northern Uganda by the UN (particularly UNDP and UNHCR) and donors. Support must also be given to NGOs interested in land rights, such as NRC and IRC.
- Focus immediately on future land rights issues for returnees. They should prioritize programming according to those problems most likely to interfere with return and with the ability of vulnerable and marginalized people to access land for growing food and for livelihood activities.
- Improve their own understanding of how land access affects food security and poverty eradication in Northern Uganda, paying particular attention to the access of female and child-headed households to land.
- Encourage the government and the UPDF to increase access to land around camps and ensure security for that land.
- Carefully consider LEMU's recommendation that the provision of seeds and tools be left to the private sector, given research findings that suggest it is of limited utility and that the funds required could be better used for other purposes. That said, seed and tool distributions might still be important for the most vulnerable returnees.

In relation to Legal Aspects of Land and Property Matters, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should:

- Encourage Government of Uganda transparency when addressing land matters.
- *Carry out mass education campaigns on land rights, compensation and processes of law. These should be carried out on the ground as well as building on the experience of radio programs such as 'Mega Lawyer'.*

⁴⁶The LEMU/CSOPNU study was funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy and was managed by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 14.

- Offer the judiciary training on land law. Traditional leaders could be invited and training pitched at a level that all could understand, since it is likely that it will be new material for all those attending. (Likewise, members of the judiciary could be invited to discussions about customary law, once the traditional leaders have a written codification.)
- Facilitate the written codification of customary land law, preceded by a study of how this had been accomplished in other countries. Even if the codification were only partial, it would assist both Rwodi Kweri (a type of local chief) and clan elders in upholding customary law, by giving them principles and precedent on which to rely. It could be psychologically important in helping to re-energise the clan judicial system and in focusing people's minds on preparation for a return to normality.
- Help elders agree on ways in which rules and procedures of customary tenure can be changed once a written codification is in place, decisions can be published and recorded, and offenders can be punished outside the clan land.
- Work with elders to ensure that they understand that traditional systems are weakening and that they must understand land law. NGOs should try to document the impact of land changes on the people through videotaped testimonies of people who have suffered from land grabbing, seeking out widows and orphans to ensure their rights have been protected, etc.

In relation to Child Soldiers, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should:

- Encourage UNICEF to develop a child soldier program, including DDR, as exists in most countries where there are child soldiers and where the agency is working.
- Promote the development of a database of missing children. UNICEF has an excellent child soldier database in Sri Lanka that could be adapted for use in Uganda for following cases through reunification and reintegration.
- Encourage the UPDF to keep records of all children killed or captured, including the date, place and circumstances of death. This documentation should be required and monitored by the ICRC - and by UNICEF if feasible.
- Encourage OHCHR and the Uganda Human Rights Commission to have teams ready to locate and take possession of records the LRA is reported to have with the names of children abducted and their parents. If it is true that such records exist, the information should be recovered and assess just as soon as it becomes available to help the reunification of abductees and their families.

In relation to Child Protection Units, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should:

- Advocate urgent discussions with the UPDF to secure full and unimpeded access at any hour to the Child Protection Unit for those NGOs designated to work with FACs. UNICEF should take up this suggestion with the UPDF without delay.
- Insist that UNICEF be routinely informed by FAC centers each time a child's release from the UPDF is delayed. Local observers believe that some FACs do not report to the CPUs. It should not be required that children report to the CPUs: they should automatically be accepted into FAC programs. (While a few street or extremely poor children may pose as FACs in order to receive

services, those children are also in need and could be referred by the transit centre for other services.)

- Pressure the UPDF to keep records on all members of LDUs. The IDP community should also be encouraged to take on this responsibility, in order to trace community members and to ensure that underage males are not recruited into the UPDF or LDUs.

In relation to Centres for FACs and Reunification/Reintegration, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should:

- Express their concern about reunification cases to UNICEF. They should suggest that UNICEF meet with the Rachele Centre, if the agency has not already done so, to discuss the problem of transfer of children from other centres to Rachele and the delay in tracing and reunification of children with their families that this causes.
- Report any cases involving the transfer of children from their home districts to the Rachele Centre, or any other place, to a UNICEF protection officer. Records should be kept on such transfers, and followed up by UNICEF or a specified NGO partner.
- Press for reception centers for FACs and adults to ask new arrivals if they know the names, places of origin and approximate ages of any persons captured or killed during their captivity. (Because the LRA gives new names to abducted child “recruits”, the real names of people are often unknown). Any information about captured or killed persons should be shared with the ICRC for tracing purposes.
- Consider the need for counselling or support groups for parents in the camps who cannot reach the Concerned Parents Association. Parents whose sons have been abducted know that they are going to be forced to participate in the killing and abduction of others, or their daughters held as sex slaves. What types of support groups are available to them?

In relation to Supporting Family and Culture, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Shift their focus to supporting families and the relationships between family members: parents and children (especially fathers and children), grandparents and grandchildren, adults and adolescents, husbands and wives, mothers and infants, etc. Importance should be given to helping people learn about human needs and trusting relationships.
- Focus more programs on finding roles for men during the period prior to return and resettlement. For instance:
 - Men could play a major role in the decongestion of the camps, and a more active role as unarmed sentries or assisting early warning systems, perhaps with perimeter listening posts and a communications system that would not expose their location.
 - Skills-based training and income production programs could target men and adolescents; most tend to focus on women and children as the most vulnerable.
 - Income generation programs for men could reduce the pressure on women, improve men’s self-esteem, and keep hitherto idle men busy during the day and early evening. Skilled men could teach skills to younger people.

- Food for work or work for tradable commodities could be offered to men and adolescent boys.
- Provide more opportunities for adolescent boys to use their energies constructively, especially given their importance to keeping and future peace. In Pabbo Camp, it was reported that boredom, the lack of traditional “male” activities, anger, frustration and humiliation all resulted in male adolescents acting out against women. Programs for young males could include athletic activities and competitions, inexpensive occupational training, and hunting dances to preserve tradition and provide a sense of pride as male members of the tribe.
- Work on introducing or reinforcing respect for the human rights of girls and women, beginning during the education of young boys and continuing throughout primary and secondary school.

NGOs should also:

- Encourage respect for elders through special programs. Among the areas that could be explored are:
 - Bringing elders and youths together to pass on traditions and create dialogue on problem issues, such as the discos that many elders find distasteful. (One elder described finding used condoms everywhere after a disco and then finding young children putting them in their mouths as if they were balloons).
 - Greater focus on access to water, food and health care among older people and the disabled. (Some NGOs have considered this but more camps need to be included and approaches need to be more participatory.)
- Explore how they can make use of traditional problem-solving methods. For instance:
 - In one camp, a protection committee intervenes in domestic violence cases in a way that is similar to how clan elders used to intervene in cases of domestic violence - by discussing the violent incident with the man involved in a group setting. In the camp where this method is used, the security committee refers serious cases to the police. Obviously this approach would be appropriate only in cases where the woman agreed to it and the abuse did not result in serious injury.
 - Traditional dance and music could be combined with new messages, on the subjects of HIV/AIDS, women’s rights, protection (don’t go for firewood alone, respect the human rights of women and girls, etc).
 - Tribalelders could – with appropriate support – take care of orphans and the disabled and orphans, as they did in before the camps. A camp “meals on wheels” program, using a wheelbarrow and a wet kitchen, could be set up, for instance, with hot meals delivered to house-bound IDPs once a day by able-bodied older people backed up by a team of teenagers or young adults and an NGO.

NGOs should also:

- Work to strengthen parent-child relationships through encouraging mothers and fathers to attend Early Childhood Development Programs. For instance:
 - Fathers in Northern Uganda could be encouraged to attend meetings about child development through role modelling by male staff and

elders. Some excellent work has been done engaging both parents in infant stimulation and providing information on infant growth and development, through the involvement of local health care workers and midwives, in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. UNICEF plans to open 300 Early Childhood Development (ECD) sites throughout Northern Uganda throughout the coming year.

- Fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters in the camp could be offered small incentives (T-shirts or a small useful item) to help build a pre-school and safe climbing equipment, or a Child Friendly Space, with help from UNICEF for materials.
- A pre-school teacher-training program could be developed, with UNICEF's help, for qualified secondary school students.
- Elders could have a daily story time with pre-school children to strengthen relationships. NGOs could provide paper and coloring supplies for illustrations. Keep it interesting and brief for short attention spans!

In Relation to Night Commuting, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Work with UNICEF in protection working sub-groups to assess the reasons for night commuting and identify ways to address non-security-related issues leading to the practice.
- Identify the major risks to night commuters and, within their number, to those most at risk. This will enable the development of prioritized, targeted and more effective protection strategies.
- Watch particularly for children and women night-commuting alone, and encourage them to travel with others.
- Continue to advocate for the protection of night commuter routes through the stationing of UPDF forces along the roads.⁴⁸ In order to prevent abuses, especially of women and children by UPDF troops and other IDPs, NGOs should – security permitting – consider nightly drives along routes to provide some protection through presence. NGOs could rotate this duty.
- Carefully examine shelter activities, such as classes or health education sessions, and calibrate them so that they do not exhaust children and/or impinge on education efforts in the camps.

UNICEF, Save the Children or other child-centred NGOs should:

- Conduct interviews with children who are night commuting to identify street children, who comprise a particularly neglected and extremely vulnerable group. At the time of this mission, no NGOs appeared to be working with street children.
- Work on establishing drop-in centres to provide supervision, play and learning activities, outreach to families and other social work activities for identified street children. The aim should be to ensure that each child has a place to live

⁴⁸ During the 2005 review of Uganda's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, however, the Government of Uganda claimed that there were restrictions on the number of soldiers in the army and that they did not have enough soldiers to patrol the roads to protect night commuters. See "Committee on rights of the child examines report of Uganda," UN Commission on Human Rights, September 15, 2005. Interviews during this mission revealed that the UPDF did not patrol the roads after 6pm despite the large number of night commuters still traveling along the roads at that hour.

and, where possible, that the problems that led to children running away or being told to leave can be resolved.

- Consider the feasibility of offering some form of support, such as a monthly food allowance, to families unable to care for children due to extreme poverty.
- Take care to ensure that children identified as “orphans” are truly without families. Institutional or foster care should always be used as a last resort. Where there are no parents, or parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children, efforts should be made to locate members of the extended family who might be willing to care for a child.

Protection Working Groups in all conflict-affected districts should:

- Address the need for social work activities for children and families. One of the problems identified by UNICEF was the lack of trained persons to provide social services. The agency should work with NGOs and donors to develop and fund a pilot training program, in partnership maybe with the Social Sciences faculty of Makerere University.

The humanitarian community should:

- Provide special night commuter shelters, or sections of existing shelters, for young mothers and other groups at possible risk.
- Encourage parental involvement in shelters. If possible, for example, the *wang oo* concept (teaching and sharing stories around the campfire in the evening) should be incorporated into shelter activities.⁴⁹
- Offer training and regular refresher courses on the Convention of the Rights of the Child to the community where the shelters exist. Police, government officials, teachers and health care workers should be encouraged to attend.
- Develop methods to encourage the confidential reporting of abuses. Records should be kept about the types of abuses occurring, perhaps through the completion of incident reports, which could be given to UNICEF for analysis and safekeeping.

In relation to Abuses by the UPDF and allied militias, NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Report allegations of illegal detention, torture and killing by UPDF soldiers to the ICRC, which will receive information about cases that occur in conflict-affected areas.
- Report alleged cases of abuse to the Ugandan Human Rights Commission, to UN offices and to national and international human rights NGOs.
- Advocate for the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Uganda to raise the issue of UPDF abuses of IDPs with President Yoweri Museveni at the earliest possible moment.
- Encourage donors to Uganda to insist on responses to allegations of abuse by the UPDF.
- Involve CSOPNU and other coalitions in lobbying the UN to deploy human rights monitors from OHCHR to Northern Uganda at the earliest possible moment.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 30.

The UN should:

- Establish human rights monitoring and reporting mechanisms that ensure confidentiality in order to establish the situation on the ground for itself, and to receive reports from NGOs and IDPs.

In relation to Legal and Judicial Matters, Human rights NGOs working in Northern Uganda should:

- Help build the capacity of the police, with a focus on due process rights, investigative skills and the proper management of cases.
- Secure legal clarification from the Ugandan government as to which court(s) have jurisdiction over UPDF soldiers who commit abuses against civilians in the North of the country, and how investigations and prosecutions are to be carried out when there are no judges available locally.
- Train a corps of legal paraprofessionals in trial monitoring in cases involving abuses of civilians by the military.
- Approach the OHCHR for assistance in approaching donors to establish a legal fund for alleged victims of UPDF abuses. This could help pay transport costs to and from court for alleged victims and the accused (for which the alleged victim must pay in Uganda) - if the civil courts do, indeed, have jurisdiction. If the military courts have jurisdiction, NGOs should support national human rights groups to request that courts respect the right of victims to press charges against suspected perpetrators.

Humanitarian and Human Rights NGOs should:

- Raise awareness among women of their right to the freedom from physical or sexual abuses, and stand up for their rights when these are not vindicated.
- Raise awareness of GBV as criminal acts of violence that involve, in most cases, the criminal mistreatment of women and girls by men. (The recent study of sexual violence in Pabbo Camp revealed that the vast majority of survivors do not even consider bringing cases before the courts.)
- Establish a special program to train Acholi, Langi and other women of Northern Ugandan tribes in the law. Even one such lawyer can make a huge difference in society, depending on the circumstances. NGO sponsorship of a female law student from Acholiland could make a remarkable contribution to the future of women of the region.
- Advocate for the recruitment of more female police, especially from the North. It is suggested that NGOs work with the UN to bring this need to the government and to assist in identifying qualified female applicants.
- Offer assistance to the Ugandan Police Academy (through an NGO with appropriate expertise) in the development of training for police officers on GBV and, in particular, in working with women and child victims of sexual violence.
- Offer police officers training on child rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, at both the Ugandan Police Academy and in the field.
- Offer training to the military, police, counsel and judiciary on due process rights for accused persons.

- Encourage the Government of Uganda to provide some sort of incentive to judges who work in the North to commit to stay long-term.
- Offer training, as soon as possible, to military officers of the UPDF and its allied militias on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol (a non-binding agreement to refrain from the recruitment of soldiers under the age of 18).

In relation to Return and Reintegration, NGOs operating in Northern Uganda should:

- Explore with the UN the need for additional international humanitarian presence along roads during any return of IDPs to their home areas, to prevent sexual assault and other abuses by UPDF soldiers and returning ex-LRA who may still be bearing arms.
- Make an effort, with the UN, to maximise international presence in sub-district areas, which will be especially important during the first stages of return, in order to contribute to stability and calm.
- Develop, with humanitarian partners, a specific system for monitoring, reporting and responding to returns. This should help ensure that returns occur in safety, that there are no forced returns, and that conditions are accurately reported. A common reporting form should be developed for incident reports. IDPs and NGOs should be made aware through radio announcements and posted notices about how and where to report incidents.
- Work closely with the UN to help set up information centres and resources for returnees.
- Support the creation of a weekly newspaper by IDPs to provide information about developments relating to return.
- Encourage the rapid return to areas of return of government officials, especially local leaders and the police, and expeditious opening of government offices, schools and health facilities. This will be extremely important in order to build confidence among returnees that their needs will be met and their rights protected.
- Encourage IDPs' election of "Property Ombudsmen" in the current IDP camps to help the most vulnerable/marginalized people protect their property rights.
- Coordinate a system of incentives for health care workers and teachers to return to the sub-county and parish levels. Such incentives might include bicycles, uniforms, "head-start" dry food rations, tools, classroom materials, books and other relatively inexpensive items.