



PROFILING CHILDREN BORN OF WAR IN NORTHERN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF AMURU

The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)

The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) is a national Ugandan non-governmental organization based in Gulu. JRP was established in 2005 to support victims of the Northern Ugandan War (1986-2008). The war between Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government created millions of internally displaced persons and tens of thousands of other victims, including child soldiers, sexual slaves, orphans, victims of torture, and children born of wartime sexual violence. The JRP's mission is to empower these conflict-affected communities to participate in processes of justice, healing, and reconciliation. JRP's activities include facilitating local initiatives for redress, documenting war experiences, providing economic empowerment programs, reunifying families, empowering community members to advocate for justice, and conducting research. Notably, the JRP played a key role in bringing victim voices to the table during the Juba Peace Talks that ended the war and in the development of the Ugandan National Transitional Justice Policy, Uganda's national post-conflict strategy.

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Project Background/Justification

Between 1986 and 2006, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) kidnapped an estimated 30,000 children and forced them to become child soldiers. Thousands of these child soldiers were forced into marriages with LRA soldiers or raped by the national army. As a result, approximately 4,000-8,000 children were born to these abducted women. Northern Uganda's children born of war experienced grave violence and loss during the war. When returning home, they experienced severe social isolation and stigma, psychological trauma, extreme poverty, and orphanacy. Now, nearly 20 years since the war's end, children born of war have received little support and often describe their post-conflict lives as more difficult than wartime. According to civil society and local government, one of the largest barriers preventing the implementation of targeted interventions for children born of war is the lack of data on them. They cite the need for a database of the names, locations, and needs of children born of war in

Northern Uganda. Similarly, the national government of Uganda stated in the Ugandan National Transitional Justice Policy that the lack of data on children born of war and other victims has delayed the drafting of a national reparations bill.

Summary of Key Challenges that Northern Uganda's Children Born of War Face:

- Loss of support structures due to community and family rejection
- Abject poverty
- Trauma from experiences of violence, disease, loss, and hunger during the war
- Discrimination and exclusion
- Issues accessing education due to school fees and stigma
- Lack of income-generating skills
- Lack of access to land
- Abuse from stepparents or other family
- Sexual exploitation
- Untreated medical needs
- Orphanhood
- Issues obtaining a national ID to participate in community development programs
- Sense of belonging

Project Description

To help fill this information gap, JRP will create a database of children born of war living in the Amuru district of the Acholi subregion in Northern Uganda. JRP selected Amuru District due to the absence of data in the area and the high number of abducted mothers who returned to the community. JRP will collect data the child's name, needs, location, and other information that will enable local entities to provide data-based programming for children born of war. We will compile the data into a digital database that will be synthesized and analyzed for a report. The report will be published and shared with civil society, local government, and national government. We also planned a series of advocacy activities to push for the implementation of new interventions (e.g., skill training, counselling, school fee support) and the passage of a national reparations bill with JRP's research-based policy recommendations.

Project Objectives

1. To expand the data on the names, numbers, and needs of all children born of war in the Amuru District of Northern Uganda

2. To inform targeted non-profit and government interventions for children born of war in the Amuru District and Northern Uganda at large
3. To support the implementation of effective reparations for children born of war by providing research-based policy recommendations and advocating for the adoption of a national reparations law

Methods

This project will take place from February 2024 through October 2024. First, an inception meeting will be held with relevant stakeholders (i.e., civil society organizations, local government officials, cultural and religious leaders, victims, and scholars). The purpose is to inform stakeholders of the project; to identify avenues for collaboration; and to ask for their support during data collection and advocacy. Then, a mapping exercise will be used to identify non-governmental organizations that work with children born of war or that have collected relevant data. We will consult with them on methodology and areas for collaboration.

Then, we will collect quantitative and qualitative data using participatory rural appraisal methods. To mobilize participants, we will recruit members of the Women’s Advocacy Network’s youth branch, an organization started by the JRP. The youth branch is made up of children born of war in Northern Uganda who have groups throughout the different parishes of Amuru.

We will use a Google Form questionnaire to collect data. Team members will translate the survey to the local language. It was determined through community consultations that it is best to collect data through the mothers or other guardians of children born of war. The guardian will answer all questions for younger children. Children above the age of 18 can answer questions with their guardian. A focus group discussion will also be held with the guardians in each parish to help to validate the data.

Data will be automatically uploaded from the Google Form submissions into an Excel spreadsheet. The database will be cleaned and potentially transformed to another platform. The data analysis will be published in a report and advocacy activities will commence. For a more detailed list of activities, see the timeline below.

Timeline

Task	Description	Timeline
Inception Meeting	Convene 30 stakeholders to inform them of the project and receive feedback	Month 1

Questionnaire Creation and Feedback	Create questionnaires for data collection and test with stakeholders for feedback	Month 1
Mapping Exercise	Conduct stakeholder mapping exercise for consultations and collaboration	Month 2
Data Collection	Engage participants for data collection through 108 field visits	Months 2-7
Data Input and Analysis	Input data into digital database and conduct analysis for reporting	Month 8
Report Generation and Publication	Write report and publish on JRP website	Month 8
Feedback and Validation Meeting	Convene 30 stakeholders to review report findings and ensure accountability and transparency in project outcomes	Month 9
Advocacy	Carry out three radio dialogues and two meetings in capital city with national government officials to publicize report, provide policy recommendations, and advocate for reparations	Month 9
Community Feedback Meeting	Share updates from government officials with beneficiaries	Month 9
Monitoring and Evaluation	Undertake regular monitoring and evaluation activities to track progress and identify challenges	Throughout

Collaboration

To ensure the project aligns with national efforts toward transitional justice, we will meet with the Ugandan Justice Law and Order Sector to coordinate our efforts with the Ugandan National Transitional Justice Policy. JRP will also work closely with the community leaders and civil society throughout the project. To ensure cohesion, we will consult with Watye Ki Gen and UN Women Gulu, the two civil society organizations that have collected data on children born of war in Northern Uganda.

Ethical Considerations/Risk Management

JRP has approval from Uganda National Council for Science and Technology Review Board to carry out this research and has obtained permission from the local government to carry out the project. The national government has cited the need for this data, so there is unlikely to be issues. The inception meeting will cover other potential concerns from stakeholders.

JRP is a research-based organization that has years of experiencing working with and researching vulnerable populations. The highest ethical research standards will be upheld, including the attendance of a psychologist during data collection, informed consent, and extra precautions to avoid causing secondary trauma to victims. JRP also aims to follow the principles of the Murad Code for survivors of systematic and conflict-related sexual violence.

To protect the privacy of participants, JRP will not publish the raw data collected in this research. JRP will store the data in a digital database on a password-locked computer, and it will remain under JRP ownership. The raw data will only be shared with local government officials and NGOs upon request and for specific interventions that directly support participants of the survey. Participants will be informed of this prior to participation. To ensure safety and security of the JRP team, the JRP will follow its established security guidelines.

Budget

JRP has received 15,000 USD from two private donors and the U.S. Fulbright Program to carry out this research. An additional 35,421 USD is needed to meet the full budget. If you would like to support the project, please contact us.