

FOREWORD

The quest to understand more about conflicts and their impact on human beings was ignited in me eight years ago through my experience of working at the Jesuit Refugee Services with Kampala's urban refugees from Rwanda, DRC, Burundi, Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia. I had seen and heard so much about wars that the best I can say of that experience is that during those nine months at the Jesuit Refugee Services; I felt like a refugee in my own country.

Since that time when I moved to Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi, with the long-term dream and aim of wanting to understand conflicts, I have encountered many life changing events and amazing people. They have shaped that dream which has materialized in this doctoral study of understanding specifically the social reintegration of formerly abducted children in the conflict in northern Uganda. The doctoral programme was funded by NUFFIC within a collaboration project between Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi, and the University of Groningen.

I would like to mention and acknowledge the events and people who have made the realization of the dream possible. First, I am extremely grateful to my promoters who accompanied me down the valleys and up the hills on this journey in the past years. All of you brought in different flavours. I heartily thank Prof. Max van der Kamp (RIP) for preparing me with the initial building blocks of this study. He promised to play music at my promotion. Max, wherever you are, I am sure you would be proud today. I profoundly thank Prof. Inge Hutter for graciously and seamlessly stepping in when Max passed on. I thank Prof. Jacques Zeelen for being the constant figure in the supervision team. My gratitude to Prof. Peter Kanyandago for being an inspiration not only as a promoter but also as an academic role model since I joined Uganda Martyrs University. I also remember and appreciate the discussions with Dr Sami Faltas at the initial stages of this study. I would like to thank you all not only for being my academic mentors but also for being there for me during the social upheavals I had to undergo during the course of this study. I am deeply grateful to you all for believing in me and never allowing me to take my eyes off the prize even in the most difficult moments when I thought I would not make any more progress. I am lucky to have worked with you and you have all made a difference in my life.

My appreciation also goes to the Institute of Ethics and Development Studies at Uganda Martyrs University for nurturing and shaping my initial dream. I thank Prof. Deirdre Carabine and Prof. Joseph Kisekka, the first two directors of the Institute who supported the initial opportunities that led to this doctoral programme. I also thank Dr. Maximiano Ngabirano for facilitating this study in his role as the NUFFIC project leader. My gratitude

goes to them and to the many colleagues whom I have encountered since 2002 when I joined the Institute and who have encouraged me in many useful ways in addition to standing in for me when I was away in Groningen or in the field.

The first concrete steps for this study were taken during my time as an East African Visiting Scholar at the Centre of African Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. I appreciate that scholarship. Particularly I thank Dr. Tania Kaiser for being my mentor at the time and for the encouragement and friendship we have developed since then. From my time at SOAS, I would like to mention a special friendship with Jane Williams (RIP) for her interest and support for my work then and in the following years even when I went to Groningen. Her belief that I would succeed was overwhelming. Jane had promised to be at my promotion and I know she would be very proud of my achievement.

For the later stages of this study I would like to acknowledge my time as a Visiting Fellow at the Centre of African Studies, University of Cambridge, which provided me (and my colleagues Dr. Martha Cheo, Prof. Mwelwa Musambachime, Dr. Aderoju Oyefusi and Dr. Adebajo Adekeye) with the opportunity to reflect and do part of my writing in an academically stimulating environment. I had the opportunity to receive feedback on parts of my work. My gratitude also goes out to Dr. Derek Peterson, Prof. Meghan Vaughn, Dorian Addison and the Coordinator of the fellowship Dr. Devon Curtis all of whom made the experience at Cambridge one to cherish.

Without the respondents to this study, this book would not have been possible. I thank the formerly abducted children who talked to us for courageously sharing their horrifying stories. For the sake of this study they re-lived their painful experiences once more. This book can in no way erase your bad experiences but I hope that by telling your story, the book can be your voice that speaks to those who will read it. I also thank the children's parents and caregivers at the reception centres (GUSCO, KICWA and CPA) for allowing us to access the children. I say thank you to the parents, caregivers and elders in the community for sharing their experiences of the children with us. Thank you to the teachers of the learning centres (amalgamated schools) at Anaka, Kweyo, St Martin's Lukome, Bungatira, and the vocational school at the Youth Education Pack in Gulu Municipality. Appreciation also goes to the children in those schools who were not abducted who also shared with us their views of their peers who had the misfortune of being victims of the LRA abductions. Moreover, I am grateful to GUSCO for the pictures drawn by the children portraying their experiences (book cover and posters in chapters 3, 5, 9).

Also key to this research and its processes are the research assistants, Mr Terence Okot, Sr Lucy Dora Akello and Fr George Ogwal. I thank you all

for the very hard work and mobilisations during the fieldwork. Thank you, Terrence, for the use of your motorbike for transport and Fr George, for providing accommodation at your place during the fieldwork in Apac district. And Sr Lucy, thank you, for the translations and help with the difficult transcriptions. Together with Mr Charles Uma, the research assistants also formed the feedback team. I thank each one of you for your insights during the feedback meetings that shaped this research in major ways.

At the Department of Lifelong Learning, University of Groningen, several colleagues at different times created for me the social environment within which to work. On this note I thank Josje van Linden, Elke Plovie, Arlindo Siteo, Albert Renkema, Maaïke Smulders, Gideon de Jong and Cuthbert Tukundane. Thanks to all of you for being there and for sharing the joys and frustrations of a '*PhDoing*' as Arlindo would say. The dinners at the 'Indian Restaurant' and the 'Globe' and the recent ones at the 'historic places' discovered by Gideon were some of the nicest moments of sharing. Away from the department I thank Hans Schoenmakers and Dienneke for the tours to the dykes, the museum in the South Sea, the ancient tombs and the Houses of Parliament in the different provinces of the Netherlands that always ended with a dinner at your home. I am also grateful for the countless lunches in the city, themed or non-themed. Thank you, Haye and Maaïke, Meindert and Dienneke, and Jacques, Julia, Jesse and Nina, and Ben Boog for opening your homes to me.

Part of the enabling social environment was created by the community of Ugandan students in Groningen. First and foremost, I thank the family of Kennedy and Gloria Amone whose house had become a place to go to if one wanted to feel 'Ugandan'. You and your little boys Alvin and Jeremy always made me feel welcome at your home. Thanks to Geoffrey Andoga and Julianne Sansa Otim for sharing with me your experiences and for showing me where to shop on my first Saturday in Groningen. For their different ways of support and encouragement, I thank my colleagues George Sengooba and Cuthbert Tukundane from UMU with whom we have been on and off together in Groningen. Very special thanks go to Proscovia Olango, who became my nurse during and after I got admitted for surgery. Prossy, words can never be enough to express my gratitude for the kindness you showed me.

On this note, I am also grateful to all my friends and colleagues who offered me their shoulders to lean on during the many months that I became ill and had to stop working on this research. Special mention to the family of Jacques and Julia, Inge Hutter, the International Office, the family of Hans and Dienneke, Josje van Linden, the family of Kennedy and Gloria, Marion Troia, Theo van Dellen, Gideon de Jong, Coby Evers, Miriam Scheltens, Corinne van Beilen and the whole lifelong learning PhD group. Some of you took turns to take me for my doctor's appointments and spent hours visiting

and phoning me. I have never felt so cared for. You all made me keep hope alive and kept me strong when I could have easily lost it at my lowest moment. I remember and thank all the visits, the flowers, cards, messages and the phone calls. You gave me your best. Thank you.

I also thank Fr Joseph Abitya and the team in Germany for first of all providing me with a place for my holidays and for taking care of me during my recovery. I thank the family of Frantzen Bethold for making arrangements and taking loving care of me during my recuperation in Germany and whenever I visited. I thank the friends in Germany who always made my short holidays there enjoyable especially the family of Jürgen and Marion, the family of Klaus and Geerti Heedt, the family of Werner and Elizabeth Schenk and my friend Johanna Michosheck and her parents.

I would like to extend special gratitude to the Rt. Rev. Martin Luluga for making me believe in myself early in life. You made me believe that success is possible whatever the circumstances. You have supported and inspired my academic (you call it intellectual) ambition right from my high school. Along the way you have been a pillar of support. To Sr Lucy and Peace Beatrice – two people I can truly call friends - I say *thank you* for your friendship.

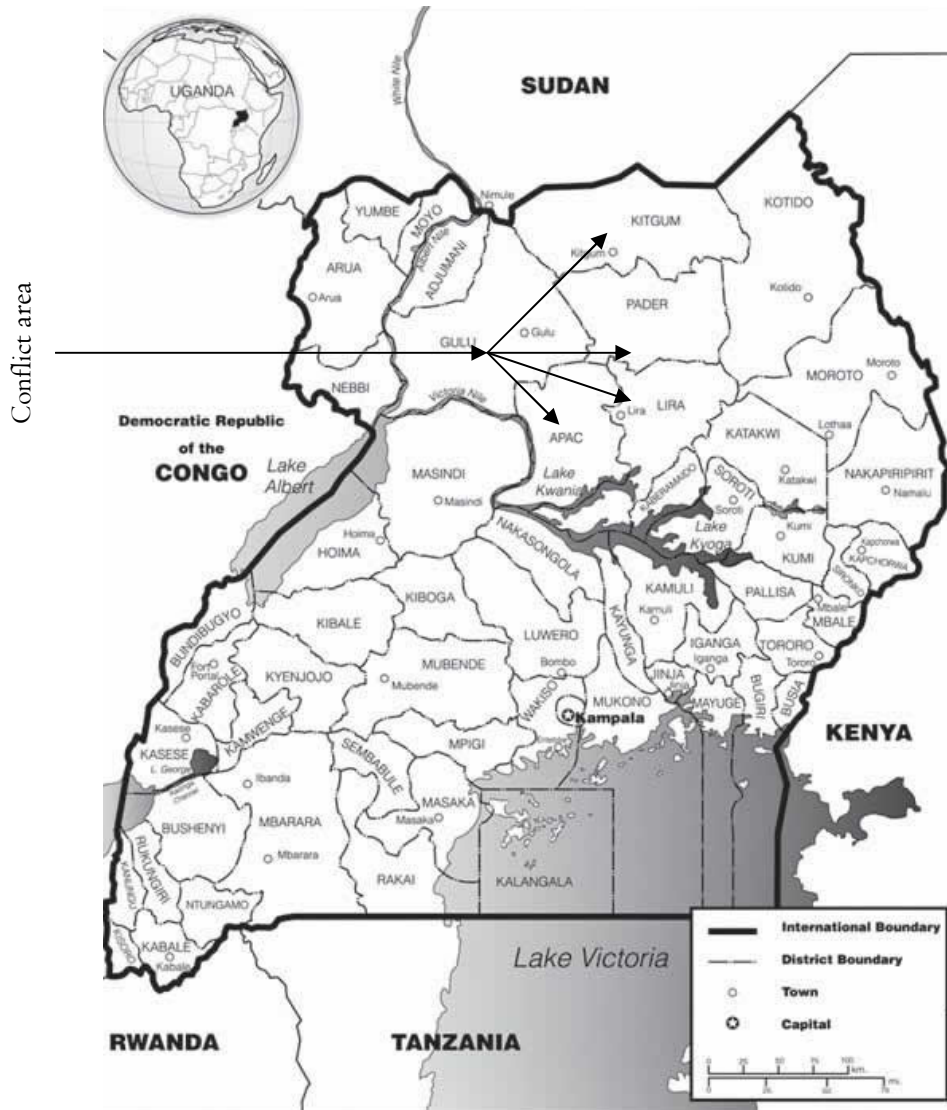
I also express my gratitude to the staff at the international office of the University of Groningen for making all the logistical arrangements for the many travels I had to make during the course of the study. Special mention to Erik Haarbrink, Geertje Holtrop, Margreet van der Giezen and Marieke Farchi.

The end result of this book would not have been possible without the practical skills of Gideon de Jong who edited the manuscript. My gratitude to Miriam Scheltens for the secretarial services she provided during the preparation of the manuscript. I also thank her for the administrative assistance she offered in preparation for the defence. I would also like to thank Josje van der Linden and Julia Swierstra to take care of the translation of the summary into Dutch. My heartfelt appreciation to my Paranympths Josje van Linden and Cuthbert Tukundane for preparing the promotion event and for the friendship we have developed over the PhD years.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my parents for their unfailing support throughout this study; - their frequent anxiety and concern about when I would come back home. But most of all thank you Mummy and Daddy for teaching us (my sisters Joyce, Monica, Faustina, Agnes and me) the most basic values that have been the stronghold in life's joys and most difficult moments. Mummy, while growing up I always felt that you were on my case more than with my sisters. You wanted me to be cool-headed. After spending four and a half years on this doctoral study, I now understand why you wanted me to be cool-headed. Thank you. Daddy, you always made me think that I could do anything. Well, I have done many things, including this

PhD. And to my extended family members whose abundant faith in me motivated and encouraged me, thank you.

MAP OF UGANDA¹



¹ Source: <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/maps.php>

