

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMMUNITY-BASED REINTEGRATION IN NORTHERN UGANDA

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses our third research question: How are endogenous methods being used by the Acholi community to reintegrate the war-affected children? Endogenous methods of reintegration are linked to community-based reintegration practices, which we identified in chapter 3 through the works of Honwana (2006) and Sendabo (2004). By way of linking the understanding of endogenous methods to reintegration, in chapter 3 we also used Kanyandago's (2008) idea of endogeneity, which considers that whatever people do they have to build on who they are and what they have, relying on their own knowledge system. Such a system evolves and develops over time and in tandem with the cultural and physical environment. The system is a unique way of responding to the problems of a people and is made up of its particular beliefs, values, religion and science. Nevertheless, an endogenous system is open, Kanyandago reasons, to outside resources that are usually borrowed and appropriated in order to make them locally relevant.

In this chapter, community-based reintegration initiatives are shown to include general acceptance, counselling and the acceptance of former abductees into family and through marriage. The latter we will refer to as accepted marriages. Additionally, problems such as stigmatization, nightmares and the specific problems of child mothers affecting community-based reintegration initiatives are understood as elements of the challenges to the Acholi endogenous system. In discussing the traditional rituals we attempt to show how the Acholi have used the beliefs and values available to them to reintegrate formerly abducted children. Finally, we identify schooling as one of the community-based methods of reintegration, with the final section presenting the experiences of formerly abducted children in school as well as the views of non-abducted children and their teachers.

7.2 COMMUNITY-BASED REINTEGRATION INITIATIVES

Community-based reintegration initiatives in northern Uganda were traced by investigating what is done at a practical level to and for the children by their families and the community in general and how the children receive those initiatives for their reintegration. Since community reintegration, according to

Sendabo (2004), involves both the returning children and members of the community, it was also important to understand how the community perceived and treated the children. The experiences of both the children and the community put together, in our view, reveal the reintegration practices in northern Uganda.

7.2.1 Acceptance

Naturally, the first people the children meet and interact with closely after their arrival either from the reception centres or the bush (for those who did not go through the reception centres) are family members. The family here could be either parents and siblings (a nuclear family) or relatives, depending on whether the child's parents are still alive or not. Most of the children we talked to said that their family accepted them on their return home. They felt welcome and part of the family and did not have problems:

“When I saw my grandmother she received me and took me home. She bought for me clothes. I stayed and stayed then I started going to fetch water.” (*Female, formerly abducted child, Lacor IDP camp*)

“Our people received me well. They said since I was back and not hurt or harmed in any way, there is no problem. They wanted to take me to GUSCO if it were possible. I told my mother that I could not go there just to sit wasting time and yet school was going on. I cannot go and just sit without doing anything constructive for months. I told them it would be better for me to stay at home. They told me it was okay if I did not want to go to GUSCO. They urged me to wait so they could buy uniform and books for me. They bought them and I went to school.” (*Male, formerly abducted child, Alokolum IDP Camp*)

“When I came back, the people did not see it bad. They received me well, because right from the time I met the LC from Kweyo, they received me well and wanted to take me to the barracks. There was no problem [of negative talk], they were grateful.” (*Former abductee, Alokolum camp*)

“When they return we don't handle them as a child belonging to another family. We take them as a child of the community and try to be kind to them and encourage them in life.” (*Focus group discussion, Lacor IDP camp*)

Thus, generally, the children feel accepted and their views on what they would like to do are also respected. This is important, especially for confidence-building as a first step towards reintegration.

7.2.2 *Community-based counselling*

Due to the complexity of the children's experience, people in their immediate environment, in informal ways, encourage and support them by talking to them and giving them advice. This is what we refer to as community-based counselling. It may come from family members, peers, community and religious leaders or other adults in the community. It is not programmed and yet it is very important for the emotional and social sustenance of the children. It is a sign of good will that the children unconsciously look for from the community:

"Yes [my parents talked to me]. Yes, they [my friends] tell me to forget about the life in the bush. They tell me since I am at home I should try to live a normal life. The life in the bush as I assessed is bad." (*Male, formerly abducted child, Alokolum IDP camp*)

"It was Sr Clementina who asked me to keep going to her [for counselling] and I went." (*Female, formerly abducted child, Lacor IDP camp*)

"This is why we have advised him to go to his paternal uncle and explain his problem so that he can be helped. He has received it [the advice] well." (*Focus group discussion, Lacor IDP camp*)

From the quotations it is apparent that the community includes the parents, friends, religious leaders and relatives. NGOs have attempted to formalize this informal structure of support for the formerly abducted children. According to our focus group discussion with community-based resource persons and community coordinators in Minakulu, NGOs trained and placed them at what they called satellite centres. The intention was to reach deep into the communities and the local council villages so that resource persons, as extensions of the NGOs, would be part of the care giving system for the formerly abducted children. However, in the end, most NGOs did not have enough funds for this kind of reach, and due to the lack of funds to run the activities for which they were trained, the community-based resource persons admitted that they had become mostly redundant. At the same time, had they followed the children into the villages they would have further drawn attention to them, again running the risk of stigmatizing them; in chapters 8 and 9 the children reveal that they prefer to be left in the informal setting where they are just like everybody else.

7.2.3 *Accepted marriages*

Accepted marriages are also a welcome experience for formerly abducted children who have returned home as young adults or child mothers. According to some of our encounters during the fieldwork, we found that

many families did not allow formerly abducted persons to marry into their families due to their perceived and actual involvement in violence while in the bush:

“I want to add, when they came back they could not marry the girls/boys who remained at home. Now they are able to marry the girls/boys who remained home.” (*Focus group discussions with elders, Anaka camp*)

Eventually, however, families started to accept that the formerly abducted children can marry into their families, although such marriages are seen to be difficult:

RI: “They do [parents do accept marriages] but they do not stay long together.”

R2: “There are cares when abductees do not match in marriage.” (*In-depth interview with elders, Industrial Area*)

Notwithstanding the difficulties, for those whose marriages are accepted and lasting, this is a hugely positive experience that we consider useful to reintegration:

RI: “My wife is positive and does not talk ill of me. We have a good relationship.”

R2: “We stay well with my husband and he keeps the children well.” (*Focus group discussion with formerly abducted children, Anaka Camp*)

The focus group discussion in Minakulu further confirmed that marriages are accepted, but pointed out that parents sometimes arrange these marriages, which means that people do not have total trust in the formerly abducted children. Families into which they marry accept the marriages on the strength of the parents’ credibility. Their parents thus stand as guarantors of the marriage. The sentiments expressed by the formerly abducted children of Coo-pe camp in a focus group discussion show this lack of trust by the community. The participants I met in this group had become young adults and were involved in a performance group that they had formed in the camp. In addition, some of them were growing vegetables and others were making bricks for sale. Many of them were married. They told us that although some formerly abducted girls were marrying, many boys feared marriage to them, and mothers-in-law did not always respect their marriages; normal domestic arguments or fights were sometimes seen as attempts by the returnee to kill their spouse. This made their marriages unstable. In fact, many girls had been separated from their husbands because parents of the boys did not want their sons to remain married to the girls. Some of the performances of this group

exposed these problems. At the time of our meeting, the group was planning to use their forum to organize a meeting of wives and husbands to make them more aware of the plight of formerly abducted people. This meeting could go a long way in proving to the community that formerly abducted children are concerned about their relationships just like everybody else. It is a way of asserting themselves in their community and thereby reclaiming their citizenship.

7.2.4 *Hard-working children*

Members of the communities considered the formerly abducted children to be mostly hard-working people:

“They work well and they are hard-working. Some of them say that while they were in the Sudan they had fields to dig. They work hard.” (*Focus group discussion, Lacor IDP camp*)

“For those who have been to GUSCO they could be encouraged to use the skills – carpenters, tailors, etc. – that they have learnt to occupy their time. There are those among them who are good at playing musical instruments, they could help in moments of recreation.” (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

From the interviews with parents and guardians, it is apparent that the children were involved and making their contribution to family activities such as digging and household chores. The formerly abducted children themselves revealed that they engaged in team and social activities such as football and drama. Some were also engaged in economic activities such as brewing and selling beer, making pastries such as *mandazi* and *chapati*, and making and selling bricks. The group we met in Anaka had a grain-grinding mill supported by an NGO. These activities help them avoid boredom and affirm them as participant citizens. The following statements from a focus group discussion with the formerly abducted children in Anaka illustrate this:

RI: “We are involved in drama and it keeps us going.”

R2: “We play football with other teams from Anaka. This helps us to avoid redundancy.”

RI: “We feel part and parcel of the community.”

R2: “We share in the life of the community.”

RI: “What we are doing now that helps us is drama. The people pay for this and this helps us to survive.”

R2: “We have laid bricks, sold them and saved the money in the bank.”

R3: “Concerned Parents (Association) gave us a grinding mill but at the moment it is broken.”

R1: “I work for my needs through selling *chapati* and *mandazi*. This earns me some income that I use for paying my fees.”

R2: “With my husband he gave me some money that I use for buying the local brew – *arege* – and resell to earn some money.”

(Focus group discussion with formerly abducted children, Anaka camp)

In the section on accepted marriages above, we showed that marriage was one of the reintegration-enhancing activities. The discussions indicate that marriages of the now young adults go hand in hand with engaging in farming activities in places where this is possible. Marriages entail working hard in order to sustain the family and make the marriage work. Also, within the families, the younger ones participate in family work and assume responsibilities. In other words, they resume normal community activities that they were cut off from at the time of their abduction. Thus they begin to use the competences they have acquired, either while in captivity, at the reception centres or which they have learned from their families, to contribute to and identify themselves with their families and communities, not as victims of violence but as productive members.

7.2.5 Problems affecting community-based initiatives for reintegration in northern Uganda – Stigmatization

Above we found that in the family setting the children feel accepted and welcomed. However, outside the family the children feel that there is hostility. People call them names and make them feel guilty about their lives, despite being the victims of abduction:

“When I had just come they had some fear. They handled me with care because they thought I could harm them since I had undergone a bad experience. I told them they were my people and I could not harm them. I told them I had seen greater havoc than what they are thinking. I added that if I start hurting them it would not be good. They then relaxed and started living with me freely. Now we live very well. That kind of talk [of teasing] was there even up to now some still remind me of that.” *(Male, formerly abducted child, Alokolum IDP camp)*

“The children at the well would tell me look at the girl who has returned from the bush, look at her red bulging eyes; the spirits of those she has killed will make her kill us; let us get away. The children were disturbed ...” *(Female, formerly abducted child, Lacor IDP camp)*

“They talk bad of her. They say she has killed people. They say things that anger her. They say you are so stubborn that is why you were abducted.”
(*Parent of a formerly abducted child, Lacor IDP camp*)

In the focus group discussions, concern was also expressed about this labelling of the children. The elders thought that name-calling, tagging and stigmatization were not healthy for the reintegration of the children. The general feeling was that it was better to have an understanding attitude towards the children:

“What causes bitterness is name-calling like ‘*olum*’, ‘returnee’? We, however, avoid that and tell them it wasn’t their wish to go to the bush. We receive them well.” (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

The focus group discussion in Minakulu indicated that due to name-calling, the children were afraid to engage with the community and only trusted their families. Name-calling made the children feel insecure and led some who were over 18 years of age to join the military.

7.2.6 Nightmares

While the children have been accepted and welcomed into their families and communities, they continue to experience the effects of abduction, especially in the form of nightmares. From a psychological point of view this may be considered an obvious repercussion of their brutal experiences during abduction (chapter 5), but from the Acholi point of view, continuing nightmares are an indication of *cen* (malevolent spirits, see chapter 3) and require the performance of cleansing rituals which are of deeper meaning. The rituals that are initially performed when the children arrive from the bush are only welcoming ceremonies. However, continuing nightmares cannot be ignored and call for rituals of greater significance. This is why both children and adults in the family or community take notice of the experience of nightmares and other signs of social problems:

“The boy is haunted; he kicks and beats the wall at night. He confessed that he killed six people.” (*In-depth interview with elders, Cerlendo*)

“I had some nightmares. Sometimes I dream that I am still in the bush.”
(*Male, formerly abducted child, Alokolum IDP camp*)

“I had [nightmares] before Sr Clementina started praying over me. One time I dreamt that we were burning Atiak camp. I screamed and ran out and hid in the bush. My grandmother had to go and look for me. I feel weak and pain in the body and sometimes I get sick [after having nightmares].

Sometimes the environment looks cloudy for me and sometimes I even lose appetite." (*Female, formerly abducted child, Lacor IDP camp*)

"Even when she came home [she says] that there are certain things which strangle her at night, I encouraged her to believe in Jesus and nothing will touch her." (*Guardian of a child mother, Kitgum*)

7.2.7 *Fear and difficulties of living with the children*

Our field experiences show that often there is fear within the community, although it appears that this fear and unease is not directly expressed to the former abductees or in their presence:

"There is a lot of fear towards these children especially those who have been away for five to ten years. At least during their stay there they might have done bad things. This is why when they return some traditional ceremonies are performed involving even sacrificing a goat." (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

"When he returned sometimes he would get so wild and even remove food that is being eaten claiming that it is time to move. No one could say anything to him; even his own father was afraid." (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

Due to this fear, members of the communities to which the children return form their own opinion of the children. These opinions are a reflection of desperation, helplessness and not knowing how to deal with the children as a societal problem. They point to the difficulties faced by families and communities in living with the returned children. The difficulties also engender a conflict in the community between its responsibilities towards the children and its need to protect itself from the aggressive traits that the children exhibit. In attempting to take on their responsibilities as parents, the focus groups revealed that to some extent they want to keep the children within the community, but in terms of the need for protection, they would like reception centres and the government to take care of the children. In such a conflicting situation, the community differentiates between those who spent a short or long time in captivity. Understandably, those who spent a longer time in captivity were generally found to be more difficult to live with and it was in relation to them that a further stay in a reception centre was suggested:

"These children we live with them here but they are not okay. Their way of thinking is not straight; they keep thinking of what they went through in the bush." (*Focus group discussion, Lacor IDP camp*)

“Mine is very aggressive. He is generally aggressive with me but he is very violent with his sister. On many occasions, I tell his sister not to answer him. I have several times reprimanded him and he calms down. I don’t have little kids here; they stay elsewhere. He is generally aggressive with [other children he plays with] and beats them. He is not okay in the mind. He was taken to GUSCO because he was abducted in April 2004 and he came back in January 2005.” (*Focus group discussion, Lacor IDP camp*)

“There are those who have been in the bush for long and were involved in destructive activities. Such groups need to be taken to rehabilitation centres like World Vision, GUSCO and Concerned Parents. If they are not taken, they may surprise us by killing others. I think it is appropriate that these categories of kids need some kind of counselling for some period to help them get to the normal trend. If they come home straight, they would have missed the rehabilitation programmes that would help them reorient themselves well. The second category is of those who have been in the bush for a week or two. This group may not have got involved in committing havoc or may not even have been given guns. Such children could just be counselled to help them reintegrate in the community. The worst group is those who have stayed longer in the bush. They are to be taken to GUSCO for the rehabilitation packages or those who were in school should be given some work to do or advised to go.” (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

The focus groups indicated that it was even more difficult to live with those formerly abducted children who engaged in drinking alcohol:

R2: “There is the category between the ages of 12 to 15; when they find alcohol to drink and they get tipsy, they no longer want jokes. If one tries to joke, then they get wild and can harm the others. This category can also be calm and constructive when they have some work to do that earns them some income but if there is no income-earning job they get frustrated and become aggressive.”

R3: “To get what she has said, many times when they drink and they try to joke among themselves, these children do not receive it as jokes. They get offended and begin to tell others that don’t you know who I am? Do you know the great things I have done? You are nothing compared to the many that I helped to rest [rest here refers to death in bush talk]. From our experience, they are delicate and need to be handled with care. With this kind of experience, I suggest that if there is a way to help them recover, it would be good. I want to say that for those who have been to the rehabilitation centres, if they come home, they could stay for three months and they send them to the rehabilitation centres again for a month. This is to make follow-up on them.” (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

Because of the difficulty of living with the children, some people suggested that the children should be institutionalized, at least for a time:

R4: "Yes, I would like to share [my thoughts] on the boy that I have walked with a few minute ago. This boy on his own volunteered to go to the bush, yet his parents were taking care of him well. He stayed there and came back home. He was so unruly. The parents have tried to send him back to school but he does not like it. Now they want to send him to a rehabilitation centre."

R3: "[He stayed in the bush] for less than a year. Such children we see them and we are sad. He is 14-years-old. Still very young and could do something good but he is so arrogant and aggressive. I suggest that such children be taken somewhere where they can be helped."

R5: "In my opinion, I think we have to make a difference in relation to how these returnees live with us. For those who come back and can live with us peacefully and can listen, these don't have to be isolated. But there is the category that keep threatening us, those who have no respect and are not for the peace and harmony of the community, I think they should be taken to Pece, the home for the formerly abducted children. Such children should face the law because they disrupt the little peace that we have. To make matters worse, these days there are the children's rights. They hear it and without understanding, they make wrong interpretation to suit them. They act without knowing what their duty is. For them it is their rights that matter; rights go hand in hand with duties. This many times presses us the parents, you just keep quiet and look because the child is aggressively claiming his rights. If possible, I suggest that the government be informed of what is going on here so that the needs of these children are attended to as a nation. Otherwise, I do not see any bright future for these children."

R6: "Yes we had a case of a child who was abducted and rescued from Soroti. When he came back home, he could not listen to anyone. He did what he wanted and no one could comment on his deeds. He was just impossible and feared. Such cases I suggest could be sent to a special school, for example, if there was money, a school for the returnees could be built so that they could go there and have special education according to their needs. Secondly, after the special education, they could be sent back home to live with us. After a period of about six months, the counsellors could make follow-up to find out from us who live with these children if they are now living well or they still need to be withdrawn and taken for more teaching and counselling. As parents we will have given them a report on each child so that they can be helped individually depending on the intensity of the problem."

R8: "In my opinion looking at the way these children behave when back home with us, I think they should be kept in rehabilitation centres. We have a case here who one day just got up and grabbed another younger boy and started dragging him. The little boy made alarm and people came to his rescue. Another day the same boy got another younger child and carried him and started moving with him towards the bush. Because of such incidences it is better that they are kept elsewhere since we are not always at home or around to keep watch at what goes on. I suggest that information about such persons be given to the zone leader so that others are alert in case of anything. They do not mind whom they attack, young, or old alike. There was another day he got hold of his brother and hit him badly. They could be visited where they are." (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

7.2.8 *Problems of social adjustment*

The quotations above suggest that as the children attempt to settle in the community they exhibit rather negative behaviour and characteristics. Aggression, arrogance, bullying younger children, not listening, being offensive and easily offended, getting drunk, demanding rights without fulfilling duties are some of the negative characteristics that the focus groups mentioned. This is obviously a complicated situation in which to take up parental roles. At this juncture the community does not fully understand the children. Yet they do not send the children away. They patiently try to tolerate and coexist with them hoping that gradually their social healing will take place.

To express further the difficulties of living with the formerly abducted children, one participant in a focus group discussion tells of her experiences with a child mother who was brought into the hospital to deliver:

"... it is not really easy to tell what goes on in their mind ... they brought a child mother to the maternity ward to deliver. ... Sometimes she behaved like a mother, other times she rejected the baby. She would stay out and it was the nurses taking care of the baby. ... Then at other moments, again she would come and carry the baby ... She didn't want to look at people face to face. If you looked her in the face she would ask you why you were looking at her, what you are thinking about her. ... This has made it hard to live with them both those who have been in the bush for a short time and even those who have not been to the rehabilitation centres. Some of them were taken when very young and have grown in the culture of the bush. Life is generally hard with them." (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

In spite of the difficulties, adults in the community diligently try to nurture and accept the children. The community seems to understand the problems and the dilemma faced by the return of the children. This attitude gives the children another chance to rebuild their lives. Nurturing, acceptance, diligence and patience, though not tangible, are the cement that holds together all the

other building blocks of reintegration, such as material support from the reception centres, skills training, traditional rituals and the return of the children to school. This attitude is shown in this excerpt from the focus group in Alokolum, which we quoted earlier:

“When they return, we don’t handle them as a child belonging to another family. We take them as a child of the community and try to be kind to them and encourage them in life. What causes bitterness is name-calling like ‘olum’, ‘returnee’! We, however, avoid that and tell them it wasn’t their wish to go to the bush. We receive them well. The one of my co-wife was abducted and was rescued from Amuru. They were not taken to GUSCO. He is here with us.” (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

7.2.9 *Child mothers in the community*

Although child mothers have all of the above experiences, as in captivity they also have some particular experiences in the community. For those who have a chance to go back to school, this largely depends on the support that their families give them, especially in terms of helping to care for their children and their own schooling needs. The two excerpts below show such family support. Both child mothers had returned to school and were in secondary schools:

“Then I said that the girl’s son will be my son to replace the abducted Joel and I will name him Joel too. That is why I am looking after this baby while the mother is at school.” (*Guardian of a child mother, Kitgum*)

“My father sent my uncle from Kitgum to pick me up and he said that we are travelling to Kampala tomorrow. We didn’t reach Kampala and I was instead taken to Luweero. I breastfed the kid from 2000-2001, then my uncle asked me; now that the kid has grown, what are your plans about studies? Can I take you to a tailoring school? I told him that I do not want to go to a tailoring school. I want to go back to primary where I had stopped and I know I will perform well. He told me that I must start from P.6. I told him that if primary six then I do not want anything to do with studying. Then my uncle said that it is your choice now, you decide where you want start. Then I went back to P.7 and I performed so well. I got 10 aggregates.” (*Child mother, Y. Y. Okot Secondary School, Kitgum*)

It is possible that most child mothers do not have such opportunities, and instead face the dilemma of a disturbed family and a desire to reunite with their bush family. Although these young girls were forcefully ‘married’ to their commander husbands, they nevertheless created some sort of family. Their return home destroys this family and this leads to further complications for the reintegration process. When we asked child mothers at GUSCO of the whereabouts of the fathers of their children, the answers included:

“He is still in the bush.” (*Child mother, GUSCO*)

“No, he remained in the bush. No [he is not going to come back]. There is no one [who will help to look after the children].” (*Child mother, GUSCO*)

For others, abduction, captivity and return created further fears in the era of HIV/AIDS:

“We know where she is but with this era of AIDS, I can’t go after her because I have the responsibility to look after my children.” (*Male, formerly abducted adult, Kitgum*)

The child mothers and their bush partners may need special attention in the reintegration process. Their reintegration may actually mean ‘reuniting’ the bush family and possibly a formal recognition of the relationship, although not everyone finds such a reunion or formalization useful. One child mother who was asked whether she would go back to her bush husband said:

“Yes, if he comes I will join him because I have already three kids with him. Secondly, these days you cannot get a man who is willing to take care of someone’s children. Even if he lived badly while in the bush, there is need to understand him. I cannot take these three kids elsewhere.” (*Child mother, GUSCO*)

However, the guardian of a child mother in Kitgum told to us how the girl would not like to be reunited with the man who was her husband and fathered her child in the bush:

“The man requested if he could give the child any support. I told him that now the mother of the baby is not interested. I cannot decide on my own. He later left and came back some other time, bought for my girl about three dresses she was at school. And he said that if she refuses his clothes then he will see what to do. He really tried his best in vain, he even brought his father to see the baby, but my daughter never gave him a chance because of what he did to her in the bush. He even gave me his telephone number but my girl has completely refused. I asked her to forgive the man and one day she said that she has freed him from her heart.” (*Guardian of a child mother, Kitgum*)

7.2.10 Recapturing community-based initiatives for reintegration in northern Uganda

From the above it can be suggested that the path to reintegration might mean different things to different categories of the formerly abducted children.

Reintegration needs vary even for those in the same category, such as child mothers. In turn, a child mother's needs may be different from those of a 12-year-old girl who is ready to return to school, while a 20-year-old adult who may not feel comfortable going back to formal schooling due to competing demands might yet benefit from skills training.

The children's experiences of reintegration in the community show that there is no clear way to categorize their specific needs in the reintegration process. Each person will undergo the appropriate rituals, depending on what they did in the bush and how they are afflicted (see below). Here, as in their war experiences in captivity (chapter 5), the particularity of their experience must be emphasized as well as the fact that each child will continue to respond individually to their experiences. These variations point to the need to pay attention to the individual in the process of reintegration. Blanket programmes such as those offered through institutionally based practices discussed in the previous chapter mask the importance of the individual and thus miss the point.

Also, geographically, children whose families were in the camps nearer to the towns had better exposure to opportunities and resources than children in camps farther away. It also appears that districts and their political/government leadership had different levels of arrangements for reintegration programmes for the children. One of our participants in Kitgum mentioned that their counterparts in Gulu had better services:

"I wish they could open up a technical (school) for the disabled like us so that we can get some small skills in carpentry or blacksmith's work such that we could earn from it. They [KICWA] provide that for the young ones, but for us the grown ups we do not have the chance to learn. But from Gulu all such training are provided, there are some people who were taken to driving school by the time I had gone for my medication, cobblers, carpentry work unlike in Kitgum where we don't get such." (*Formerly abducted male, Kitgum*)

Overall, however, it appears that the children feel accepted. Positive experiences seem to outweigh the inevitable negativities that pale in comparison to bush life. Acceptance is a good starting point in a reintegration process that will take a long time to complete. Feeling accepted will release the social energy required for meaningful participation as members of a community. Despite these positive feelings, our focus group discussions with the elders and other informal interactions indicate that adult members of the community find it rather difficult to deal with the children.

Although stated differently, the present discussion of the community-based reintegration initiatives in northern Uganda are in essence similar to speaking out, sharing experiences and listening, which Sendabo (2004)

describes as methods used in Liberia. Our current discussion is also similar in essence to Veale's (2005) account of the importance of being sociable, getting along with people and eliciting support for the former fighter girls in Ethiopia. These similarities point to Kanyandago's (2008) notion of endogeneity, each community having their own resources and values which they rely on even in times of stress to sustain their existence. This finding calls for an investment in the understanding of the endogenous knowledge system of communities involved in conflict so that we can draw from resources such as the value of and belief in rituals to address conflict-related problems such as the reintegration of children involved in war.

7.3 THE USE OF TRADITIONAL RITUALS AS A FORM OF REINTEGRATION IN NORTHERN UGANDA

In chapter 3 we saw the kinds of rituals that the Acholi society offers in cases where social disharmony occurs (Harlacher *et al.*, 2006; Baines, 2005). We also saw that these rituals flow from the Acholi spiritual world-view (Baines, 2005; Beherend, 1999). As part of the larger spiritual world-view, the rituals are in our opinion what Kanyandago would (2008) refer to as endogenous resources. In this section we will examine how they have been used by the Acholi community to reintegrate the children.

7.3.1 *Traditional rituals and their use*

During our fieldwork we attempted to understand how the Acholi used these endogenous resources to reintegrate children who have been involved in war. Through the life histories of the formerly abducted children (see chapter 5) we found that families drew from this societal resource to help their returned war-affected children. Many of the children said that on their arrival home, their families performed some of these traditional rituals to receive them and cleanse them of any atrocities they may have committed while in captivity:

“They asked me if I killed any one. I told them I had not killed and so they said if I didn't then they couldn't sacrifice the sheep. I stepped on an egg.”
(*Male, formerly abducted child, Lacor IDP camp*)

“When I arrived home there was no one. I entered the house and put my little bag and then went to bathe at the stream. When they heard that I had returned they waited for me as I was coming from the stream and put an egg and a layibi (a long stick used for opening the granary) and asked me to step on. There was no prayer. When I stepped on the egg I just went into the house. There is no problem.” (*Male, formerly abducted child, Alokolum IDP camp*)

The focus group discussions also confirmed the importance of the practice of traditional healing. For instance, in a discussion at Alokolum IDP camp a participant explained:

“The one of my co-wife was abducted and was rescued from Amuru. They were not taken to GUSCO. He is here with us. I told him of the Acholi ritual of cleansing of stepping on an egg, ‘*layibi*’ or ‘*pobo*’ and pouring water. I performed this ritual to receive this boy home.” (*Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp*)

Some of the children returned and stayed without the performance of rituals. Reasons advanced for this were different for each individual but would usually be related to the loss of family or close relatives who would have been responsible for the organization and performance of the rituals for the returnees. Other families were too poor to afford the costs of the rituals. However, because the rituals were important to Acholi culture under the circumstances the children found themselves in, the institution of the *kal kwaro* eventually organized a communal ritual for them:

“When they came they were not welcomed in a traditional way and so they could not stay well. But when the paramount chief came he organized the ritual and they stepped on the egg. They were over 400 of them. After that they started living well. Later the chief of Alokolum gave a goat and together with the paramount chief the ritual was performed and they started living well. Others came to me and they brought a sheep and the ritual of cleansing was done and they went back home peacefully. This has brought a big change.” (*Focus group discussion with elders, Anaka IDP Camp*)

Despite the importance of the rituals, some of the returned children did not have supportive families to organize the rituals for them. Those who did not go through the rituals felt that they were not welcome or accepted at home. We have quoted this passage previously in another context but it still illustrates the tension that arises when formerly abducted children have families that do not support them through these rituals:

“He told us he feels his father is not concerned about his welfare and he feels like killing the father [he wants] to get some money to purchase items for the Acholi rituals ... because his parents are saved [born again Christians] and they are not in support of anything traditional. ... He confesses that when he was in the bush he drank human blood and he is convinced that that act is the one disorganizing him. His father said that is something that he cannot waste his money on. ... On my own I see that since he is the one looking for the money, goat and other things for the ritual, it will not be

well done. It is appropriate that the people of his clan should be the one to get the goat and perform the ritual.” (*Focus group discussion, Lacor IDP camp*)

The rituals are a way of accepting a wayward member back into the community. Individuals cannot perform rituals for themselves as it will be seen to be ineffective. The quotation explains that this traditional method of reintegration is a two-way exercise, a give and take. You cannot do wrong to the community and then receive, cleanse and forgive yourself on your own. If mistakes have been made you must own up to them and it is up to the rest of the community to grant forgiveness and accept that by confessing your guilt you are cleansed and thus worthy of their company and support once again.

While most returned children and their families were keen to perform the rituals, some were not interested in them. They mentioned the tension between the Christian religion and the rituals as the reason they opposed their performance:

“The elders wanted to perform the rituals, because they thought that I had died. So I refused, I told them that it was God who took care of me and helped me to come back home. So if you want to be peaceful with me just organize a prayer for me. Because the people here in Kitgum perform by sprinkling water on you. No, [prayer] was not [organized for me], because of the insecurity we had no time to pray as we were always on the run. The rituals are also similar to the one of ours here; because when one is believed to have died and yet he comes back alive they perform such. They even put for me an egg to step on, then I refused and I told them that if you want me to go back then perform your rituals but if you want me home, then spare your rituals. They left me.” (*Male, formerly abducted adult, Kitgum*)

“When she returned I took her up to Church and I thanked God for her life. Because I am a born-again Christian and all my hopes are in God. I got born again in 1966. . . . They asked me to perform some traditional rituals on her return. I refused. . . . She is my brother-in-law’s daughter. . . . But the mother of that girl wants me to perform a traditional ritual and I told her with me forget about it. It is only prayers that can work with me. They say nothing much because they know I am a born-again Christian . . .” (*Guardian of a child mother, Kitgum*)

7.3.2 *Traditional rituals, religion and modernity*

Because of this tension between traditional rituals and some people’s Christian beliefs, religion and prayer also take a central role as practices of reintegration. In addition to the quotations showing an explicit preference for prayer, other interviews and life histories also indicate that there is indeed some reliance on religion and prayer to help the children:

“Major counselling is praying to bring them together as children of God which is to love one another. They are taught religion.” (*In-depth interview with an elder, Industrial Area, Gulu*)

“They do pray [for us]. They come from Holy Rosary Catholic Parish.” (*Former abductee, GUSCO*)

The details and nature of such prayer rituals are not clear from our sources of information. Nonetheless, we think that this particular activity is very important to counteract the pseudo-religious rituals which were the foundation of the LRA movement and that the children were subjected to while in captivity.

Notwithstanding the tension between traditional rituals and Christian beliefs, during the fieldwork we gained the impression that for the majority the performance of the rituals and Christian prayers were not mutually exclusive. People would participate in the welcoming or cleansing rituals and still go to pray in Christian churches. Honwana (2006) revealed an interesting merging of traditional Mozambican rituals and Zionist Christian rituals for cleansing youth who had been involved in the Mozambican war. Such a combination avoids the tensions experienced in northern Uganda which bring to mind the debate about the marginalization of African cultures after the introduction of Christianity in Africa and the push for the ‘inculturation’ and localization of Christianity in African churches today.

Related to this is also how far secular modernity has influenced the attitudes of people towards traditional rituals. We discussed this tension between modernity and the performance of traditional rituals in northern Uganda in one of the meetings with the feedback team. The dominant argument from the feedback team members was that in theory most modern Acholi would prefer not to believe in traditional beliefs and practices. However, they cannot isolate themselves from the still highly communal society and the consequences of living in it. Those living in towns may not accept traditional practices in periods of stability, but when there is a problem, people usually fall back on tradition to solve it. The feedback team members added that this explains the fact that most people are still buried on their ancestral lands, even if they died hundreds of miles away. It was further argued that if the reintegration of the formerly abducted children were to rely solely on modern secular solutions, the children would not feel at home, due to the isolating tendencies of modernity. Acholi culture, it was posited, has a way of accommodating most issues, including this ‘new’ societal problem of formerly abducted children. The discussion with the feedback team concluded that this is why traditional practices have overridden modernity and thus need to be taken into account. These debates about religion and modernity versus

tradition are interesting. They can be linked to the question of the relevance of Western Christianity to African problems/cultures and the issue of formal retributive justice versus informal restorative justice. Unfortunately these are beyond the limits of the current research.

7.4 ACHOLI TRADITIONAL RITUALS ADAPTED FOR REINTEGRATION OF FORMERLY ABDUCTED CHILDREN

Thus far we have found that the children acknowledged undergoing some traditional rituals. Most of these we now know were initial, general rituals for welcoming and cleansing. However, there are also rituals with a deeper significance which are performed for individuals when they present with specific afflictions (*cen*), in this case related to conflict. According to Harlacher *et al.* (2006) and Baines (2005), for a long time the practice of traditional rituals had been on a downward slope due to social changes, such as those accompanying the introduction of the Christian religion and the general effects of modernization introduced in colonial times. However, from our experiences in the field, we now know that people are aware of the existence of the rituals and have actually used them, although some of the specifics of practice may pose some challenges.

Due to the somewhat 'internal' nature of the conflict in northern Uganda (see chapter 2), the Acholi people have had to look inward to their own resources to mitigate the impact of the conflict. The studies by Harlacher *et al.* (2006) and Baines (2005) have recorded the attempt to reconstruct the significance, purpose and practice of the Acholi traditional rituals. We note that originally the rituals were not necessarily performed during war but for all sorts of social problems and disharmony, as explained by Baines (2005) and Behrend (1999) in their discussion of the Acholi world-view (see the theoretical framework, chapter 3). To mitigate the social consequences of the disastrous two-decade conflict, today the rituals are being adapted for the purpose of reintegration.

We did not have an opportunity to witness any of the rituals identified by Harlacher *et al.* (2006) and Baines (2005) and discussed in chapter 3, such as *mat oput* and *nyono tong gweno*, during our fieldwork. Participants in our research, however, narrated to us either actual rituals performed in cases they had witnessed or explained how a particular ritual is performed. In one of our focus group discussions one such story concerned the ritual performance of *kwero merok* (cleansing ritual for someone who has killed during war). The steps followed in the performance of this ritual depend on

whether the person to be cleansed has killed a woman or a man. The ritual performance for killing a woman and a man were narrated thus:

“There are different rituals for men and women. Ritual for one who has killed a woman:

- Woman’s cloth, a young girl, a calabash, any vegetable, water pot and clay bowl (*atabo lobo*), broom and reeds (*raa*) are collected.
- The elders are gathered and someone who had killed and been cleansed before is invited to come and cleanse the next killer.
- The bark of *ogali* tree is stripped and used as a rope for tying the killer’s arm, waist and head.
- A goat, black and white at the side (*dyeI lapel*) is taken with the killer to the wilderness.
- The one to cleanse and the young girl hold the hand of the killer, they *wayo* (a war-like song for celebrating the killing of a big animal or even a person who is an enemy) while harassing/threatening the spirit with ‘mock fight’.
- All who have gone to the wilderness hold tree branches and spears. The killer is then given the goat to hold. All the elders spear the goat as the victim holds it. The killer is the first to spear the goat followed by the one to cleanse him/her and all the others spear the goat after the two.
- The meat is cut by all and roasted in groups without any spice or treatment; the meat has to be eaten all.
- The fire is destroyed (put out) with *wayo*. No coal has to be left aglow. The people then leave the scene to come home.

Ritual for one who has killed a man:

- The elders have to prove beyond doubt that the victim has killed a man.
- A girl who has not had menses, a spear and a hornless goat (*lalem*) are taken to the bush. The goat is given to the victim.
- The elders begin to *wayo*, the victim blows the horn while alternately expressing the identity of his clan (*mwoc*), the little girl makes ululation. They will be seated on the ground.
- The one to cleanse then spears the goat and the others follow. This is done near an anthill (*aripo*).
- They carry *kwete ading* (a local brew); its squeezed using a sack made of grass.
- The goat is skinned and slain, put in that anthill and then roasted. The firewood used is broken using the left hand. A piece of the roasted meat is placed on top of the spear and its to be eaten from there first by the killer then the one to cleanse him/her till its over. The rest of the meat left down is eaten by the others.

- The *kwete* is drunk. The killer then starts to make mock fight and they run home while doing this. On arrival at home the killer is closed in the house for some time.
- While performing the ritual in the bush they give *moi* (praise name) for the killer e.g. Onekamoi, Tukamoi.
- The arm is *agora* (a kind of tattooing on the arm showing the number of people whom he/she has killed).
- On return home, the killer does not eat or drink with the relatives of the person he/she has killed. The two clans sit together and each brings a sheep for reconciliation. The victim's relatives bring a winnow, piece of broken pot or big calabash in which they pour the *kwete*. They then pour *oput* (this is a common tree in Acholi land with bitter tasting roots and bark used for different rituals but in this sense the bitter drink made from the smashed roots of the tree) in the *kwete*.
- The sheep brought by the two clans are exchanged; their heads are cut at once while they face the opposite clan.
- Meanwhile, a lot of insults and mock fights are involved. A *layibi* (a pole used for opening a granary) is used to symbolically separate the people.
- The uniting point is at drinking *oput*. All present kneel and drink the *oput* in turn without touching down or the calabash.
- After that the number of goats requested for compensation are to be given to the clan of the person who had been killed.
- They can now start eating together there and then. The relationship is restored."

(Focus group discussion, Industrial Area, Gulu)

This particular ritual thus takes a gendered approach to its performance. The reasons for this gendered approach were not made clear to us but noting the difference is important because it emphasizes the importance of the particularity of the experience. It also allows us to see that the Acholi worldview is a gendered one.

7.4.1 Other rituals

Another ritual, *ryemo anyenya*, was performed for a girl who did not have an initial cleansing ceremony performed for her on return from the bush. According to the focus group discussion at the Industrial Area in Gulu municipality, the girl tried to start life after her return without any of the ceremonies; however, her bush past eventually caught up with her. She married and became pregnant, but on delivery her baby died. She also heard voices telling her that she was stepping on them. In the process of looking for explanations for her affliction and the death of her baby she was asked what had happened to her while in the bush. She explained that they had been

sleeping by rivers and on mountains and hills – all of which are the dwelling places of spirits. In addition, she had been raped by a river. To chase away the evil spirit, a black goat was taken to the river and sacrificed there. She is now fine and has four children after the first who died mysteriously.

When the elders in a focus group discussion in Anaka camp talked about performing rituals for the returning children, we asked them what rituals they performed. They mentioned *moyo kom* and *lam romo*:

RI: “There is *moyo kom*. A recent case is when a girl killed her sister and ate and drank the blood. They brought a sheep and she stood in front. The sheep was cursed and the sheep was killed and cooked and eaten. That was the blessing given her to be well. Later she was asked how she was feeling; she said she was getting well. This ritual depends on the intensity of the offense.”

R2: “Another ritual is of *lam romo*. A sheep is brought and it is cursed in this way: ‘You the sheep you are a helper/cleanser your blood is to cleanse this child. Every bad thing let it go to the sunset’.”

Although these elders actually performed the rituals, to us the accounts still lack the detail that we could observe if actually present at such a ritual performance.

Another short ritual performed for someone who has killed many people was explained during one of our feedback meetings. A young man had returned from the bush, where he had killed many people. He did not know where those he had killed came from and he was being haunted. He had come home with the clothes of all those he killed, so to help him, the clothes were collected and burned under a big tree. After this, the young man was not haunted again. We did not find out the name of this ritual but what is clear is that the young man acknowledged that he had killed many people and therefore would be subject to *cen*. Anticipating this, he had come home with the clothes of the people he had killed. This is similar to what Behrend (1999) tells us about the Acholi veterans of the Second World War, who had come home with mementoes taken from people they had killed. Once home in northern Uganda, these mementoes were used to cleanse them of any bad spirit (*cen*) that would follow from their acts during the war. These examples show how over time the Acholi have relied on their culture to deal with the consequences of war.

The rituals we encountered through different narratives during our fieldwork, such as *nyono tong gweno*, *moyo kom*, *lam romo*, *ryemo anyenya* and *kwero me rok*, are short and medium-term rituals for dealing with reception and cleansing/treatment of immediate manifestations of psychosocial problems. They help to alleviate the physical, psychological and social problems of formerly abducted children. According to my feedback

team members, the long-term reintegration of these children would only be complete when the *mato oput* ceremonies had been carried out. At the time of our main fieldwork, the process of *mato oput* had not started, primarily because the conflict was still on-going but also because the *mato oput* as a ritual occurs over an extended period of time. The feedback team members stated that it is a very long process that involves acknowledgment by the offender and their clan that they had killed, negotiations between the clans of the offender and the offended, mediation by the elders, and then an elaborate performance of a ritual as the climax, involving the presentation of gifts as compensation/restitution. Altogether, this may take years or even decades. According to Harlacher *et al.* (2006), it is a process of re-establishing broken or suspended relationships between two clans after a killing has occurred.

7.5 ACHOLI SPIRITUAL WORLD-VIEW, RITUALS AND UNDERSTANDING REINTEGRATION THROUGH TRADITION

Through the interface between the Acholi spiritual world-view (chapter 3) and the war experiences of formerly abducted children (chapter 5) we can say that disruption of the spiritual harmony of the children as part of the Acholi community and thus their spiritual world underscores the need for their reintegration through the use of traditional rituals. The disruption of spiritual harmony occurred at several levels during the conduct and experience of war in Acholi land.

7.5.1 *Irreverent treatment of spirit abodes*

First, there was the irreverent way in which the dwelling places of the *jok* (spirits) were treated during the general conduct of the war. As we have seen from the children's experiences presented in chapter 5, the formerly abducted children (and other combatants) passed through common dwelling places of *jok* such as rivers, forests, rocks and mountains without regard for these spirits. Instead, most of these dwelling places of the *jok* became battlegrounds and hiding places for the children and other combatants during the war. Many of the girls who became child mothers in the bush might have been raped or sexually molested at or near these places. According to Behrend (1999) such abodes of the spirits are respected and revered. Therefore, we can infer that raping a young girl at or near such places – which could have been the case with the child mothers – is unacceptable conduct in the Acholi world-view.

7.5.2 *Deaths and dead bodies*

At the second level, in the Acholi world-view, harmony with the spiritual world is disrupted when people pass through places where someone has been killed or when one passes by an actual dead body, where the spirit may hover for lack of appropriate burial rites (Harlacher *et al.*, 2006; Baines, 2005). In one of our feedback meetings this was emphasized, someone pointing out that if one passes near a dead body found by the road side or near a spot where a death occurred, to prove one's innocence you have to throw a fresh branch of a tree on the corpse. This also means appeasing the spirit of the dead and wishing the deceased spirit a peaceful repose. During the war, there were massacres allegedly committed by both the UPDF and the LRA, such as those at Atyak and Barlonyo (Eichstaedt, 2009) and widespread random killings, as well as many deaths on the battlefield, which was often in the community or a displaced people's camp or in the vast fields in the area. According to the Acholi belief, as explained by Harlacher *et al.* (2006), Baines (2005) and Behrend (1999), this implies that many homesteads, farming and communal areas of the Acholi land are now infested with the spirits of the dead and will need to be redeemed through traditional rituals. Such rituals are of even more importance for the war-affected children, who in their time in captivity had to crisscross wide battlefields and places of death (chapter 5) that according to the Acholi beliefs would have become infested with spirits. The spirits which reside in such places are restless or even angry because they have not received proper burial or were killed for no reason. They need to be appeased (Behrend, 1999). As the children moved through the bush in northern Uganda with the LRA, it is unlikely that they spent time appeasing the spirits by throwing fresh tree branches on corpses, some of which would have been their own victims. Sharing a sign of peace with the dead would have been unlikely, as extreme violence by the children was after all expected of them by their commanders as part of their induction into the LRA ranks (chapter 5). Thus, the children would have avoided such rituals that might appease the dead as a survival tactic on their part, and yet they would not have escaped the wrath of the dead. On their return home, there is therefore a need for the children to undergo the traditional rituals, which can spiritually reintegrate them with the spirits of the dead and their communities, for the sake of their wellbeing.

7.5.3 *Murders*

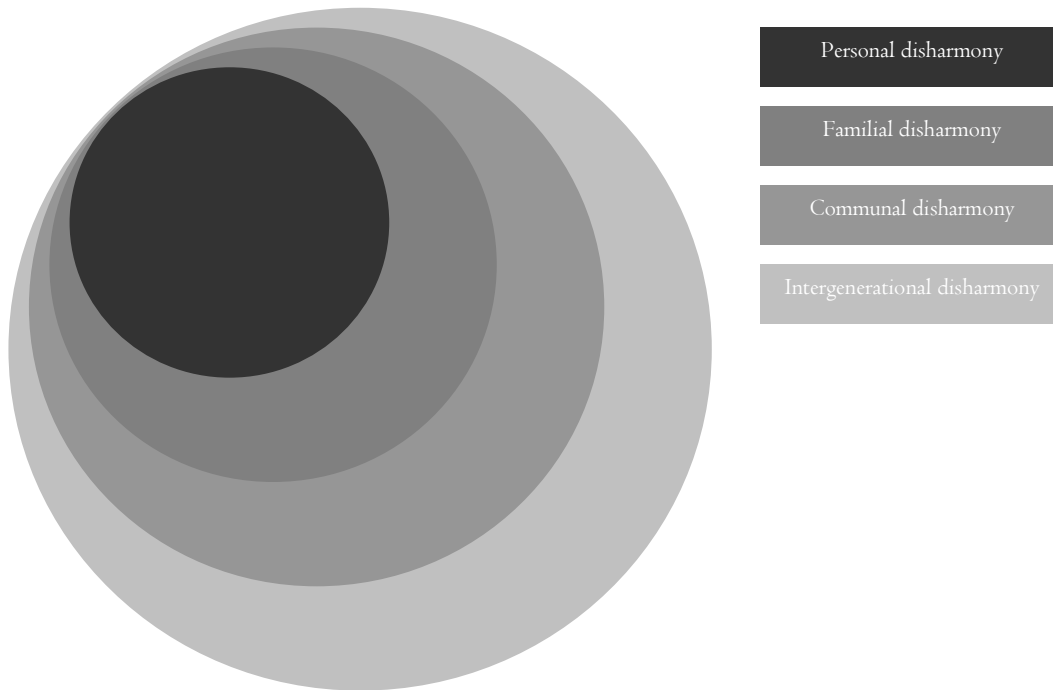
Third, disharmony within the Acholi spiritual world occurs when there is a deliberate murder and it has not been righted (Baines, 2005). In the reintegration landscape most of the war-affected children have either by force or otherwise engaged in horrific killings (chapter 5). Following the children's accounts of their experiences of forced murders, it is clear that most have a

sense of a disrupted harmony with their spiritual world as a result of these killings and thus they need to undergo traditional cleansing rituals to re-establish that harmony and thus be reintegrated along with their families into the larger community.

7.5.4 Intergenerational disharmony

Finally, the impact and/or manifestation of the displeasure of the *jok* about any of the above types of disharmony may be long-term, often crossing generations (Harlacher *et al.*, 2006; Baines, 2005). This intergenerational character of the impact of spiritual disharmony manifested as *cen* also underlines the importance of the performance of traditional rituals for reintegration. In the Acholi spiritual world-view, as already seen, if the rituals are not performed, future generations of the Acholi are likely to be haunted and attacked by *cen*, especially considering the scale of the socially disharmonious activity and wrongdoing that has pervaded society during this conflict. Thus, the performance of the traditional reintegration rituals is not just for the benefit of the present generation but also for the wellbeing of posterity.

Figure 2: Levels of Spiritual Disharmony



7.6 NECESSITY FOR SOCIO-SPIRITUAL REINTEGRATION

On the basis of the discussion thus far, we can identify some key findings that underscore the importance of socio-spiritual reintegration. The findings explain why spiritual reintegration is important.

7.6.1 *The potential to manifest 'cen'*

First, it is apparent that reintegration at a spiritual level is necessary because those who return from war have the potential to manifest *cen*, especially related to the spirits of the people they have killed and due to other atrocities accruing from such a war. It is due to this potentiality to manifest *cen* in the aftermath of war that historically, when the Acholi people returned from war, they would subject themselves to ritual purifications. For instance, when the Acholi soldiers of the King's African Rifles returned from the Second World War they brought mementoes (such as pieces of cloth and buttons) gathered from the enemy they had killed and thus had evidence of the need for traditional ritual purifications. In contrast, the Acholi soldiers who returned from the civil war in the Luweero Triangle⁷ with the NRA guerrillas of Museveni did not submit themselves to such rituals, and it has been argued that this may explain the many difficulties and problems (such as AIDS, war and conflict)⁸ the Acholi have faced since then. The soldiers had returned with the potential to manifest *cen* and it was not dispelled; and since they were not cleansed, they were never reintegrated into society (Behrend, 1999: 28-29). If such an explanation reflects a strong belief of the Acholi people, this in itself provides the basis and a reason for the performance of traditional rituals: the spiritual reintegration of the formerly abducted children can avert the reoccurrence of *cen* at a societal level in Acholi land. In fact, this appears to have been realized. In the first phase of the fieldwork, when the formerly abducted children had either just returned or were still returning, when asked if they had undergone traditional rituals, most answered in the negative. However, a year later, during the second phase of the fieldwork, when the war-affected children had been in the community for some time, most had undergone the rituals or were seeking to undergo one. This might be explained by the fact that the *kal kwaro* (the institution of the paramount chief) had undertaken the mass performance of the rituals. As mentioned above, it had become very difficult for many families to perform the

⁷ The area in central Uganda where President Yoweri Museveni launched and fought his guerrilla war against the then government.

⁸ This is the view given to Behrend in the 1990s when the AIDS epidemic was poorly understood and an explanation for such a new communal stress, in addition to the existing conflict, was found in the spiritual world-view. In my view, today this explanation would find little credence in communities that have better knowledge of AIDS.

traditional rituals for their returned children because after many years living in the camps they neither had nor could afford chickens and goats to perform the rituals. Thus, the administration of the *kal kwaro* of the Acholi took it upon itself to assist the communities with the communal performance of these rituals for the returned children.

7.6.2 *Actual haunting by 'cen'*

The second reason why these rituals are important is because some of the formerly abducted children had indeed felt haunted by *cen* and thus actively sought ritual purification. The story of one such formerly abducted person struggling with the effects of *cen* and his parents' Christian attitude towards traditional rituals was told during one of our focus group discussions:

"We have just been talking to one of the returnees who was behaving as if he had run mad; we asked him if he knew what was happening. He told us he did not. He told us he feels his father is not concerned about his welfare and he feels like killing the father. We however discouraged him from killing his father. We told him, what can be done to redeem your situation is prayer and also performance of some Acholi rituals. What we have observed with him is that he is very unpredictable. One time he kept quiet for three days without talking to anyone and not even eating. That act made living with him hard because he is young and we have known him for long. He is about 18-years-old. He is there but with very little improvement except that he has fixed in his mind that his father is bad and he even does not want to see his father. It is very hard to tell from him [what his father has done to him]. At times he loses his head and behaves like somebody possessed by some spirits. The best we can do is to wait for him to calm down and counsel him; we have just been with him ... when his head gets disorganized he does not consider anyone. The other idea that he has is that if he makes effort to get some money to purchase items for the Acholi rituals, then that would help him. This is because his parents are saved (born-again Christians) and they are not in support of anything traditional performed on him. He confesses that when he was in the bush he drank human blood and he is convinced that that act is the one disorganizing him. His father said that is something that he cannot waste his money on. We have advised him that if he gets money he should buy the goat so that those traditional things are performed and he gets well. ... this is why we have advised him to go to his paternal uncle and explain his problem so that he can be helped. He has received it well. On my own I see that since he is the one looking for the money, goat and other things for the ritual, it will not be well done. It is appropriate that the people of his clan should be the one to get the goat and perform the ritual." (*Focus group discussion, Lacor IDP Camp*)

7.6.3 *Rituals as communality in adversity*

Third, the essence of the rituals discussed is in the expression of communality and togetherness in the face of adversity. This is why everyone involved is a key actor: the facilitator of the ritual (can be a medicine man, healer or elder), the offender (in this case formally abducted children), their victims (the dead), survivors of their actions (the families/clans of the victims) and the family of the offenders. Depending on the type of ritual performed, all of these categories play different roles but remain key actors for the success of a ritual. The rituals also show the importance and use of symbolism. The Acholi rituals we have seen are full of symbolism, such as is apparent in the use of food – normally communally shared during the rituals, signifying unity and life – as well as mock fights, the use of fire, animals and words. These take the place of the offence, the offender, the offended or victims in variously prescribed ways.

From this it can be inferred that apart from their beliefs and values, community and symbols are the other endogenous resources available to the Acholi for purposes of reintegration. We can therefore say that the ability of the Acholi to use the endogenous resources found within their own environment for the purpose of reintegration of formerly abducted children provides hope that the long-term need for reintegration will be met.

7.6.4 *Need for different levels of traditional reintegration*

Fourth, from the above we can identify a number of levels of reintegration within traditional ritual practices. These are:

- A. Reintegration with the self. This is required due to personal exposure to evil spirits while in the bush. The need for personal reintegration is apparent due to the personal suffering experienced by the formerly abducted children on their return, such as the fear of rejection, nightmares and restlessness. According to Honwana (2006; 106), people returning from war are a means or 'vehicles through which unquiet spirits of the war dead can enter and afflict (the individual and) entire communities'. Thus, personal suffering is likely to be a manifestation of unquiet spirits. In the case of northern Uganda, *nyono tong gweno* and simple rituals such as *kiro pii* (sprinkling of water on the affected child) are usually very helpful as reintegration practices in relation to the psychosocial stability of the individual.
- B. Reintegration with the immediate community. This is fused with level A. As the formerly abducted children go through personal suffering they affect their family members and the immediate community with whom they interact in their daily life. As

Honwana puts it, 'their wrong doings can affect their families and villages as well' (2006: 117). When they return home they are 'unclean' and if they are not cleansed they can pollute the family and those with whom they interact, causing sicknesses, death and other misfortunes they have brought home with them. The mid-term rituals such as *kwero merok* and *ryemo anyenya* as we saw above will protect both the children and their families (as proxies) from the vengeance of the spirits.

- C. Reintegration with the direct victim or victims of the formerly abducted children is premised on the fact that these are the actual victims that endured violence and death at the hands of the children. While they are usually dead their spirits cry out for vengeance and proper burial rituals. Some come to haunt the children and might manifest as *cen*. Their spirits need to be put to rest by appeasing them so that they can also forgive their tormentors and killers.
- D. Related to this is reintegration with the neighbouring clan or ethnic group to which the direct victims belong. Clans or ethnic groups to which victims of violence belong are living and bitter towards the clans of the formerly abducted children who have killed their relatives. Harlacher *et al.* (2006) observed that the spirits of the direct victims might also demand solidarity from their clan members by afflicting them with disease or other misfortunes.
- E. All of these forms of spiritual disharmony reveal the need for reintegration with the spirit world and thereby the re-establishment of the harmony that keeps the Acholi spiritual world in balance, which in turn is a compass for social and moral harmony.

In this study, the need for reintegration levels C to E are best addressed by the long-term ritual of *mat oput*. Because *mat oput* is ultimately a reconciliation process, the implication is that reconciliation in this manner will be the ultimate form in which broken relationships caused by the conflict can be rebuilt. The findings of our research relate to the studies by Honwana (2006) in Mozambique and Angola, Tol *et al.* (2005) in Nepal, and Igreja (2005) in Mozambique, on the necessity of the cultural relevance of healing practices in the aftermath of conflict and violence.

7.6.5 Need for rebuilding an 'integrated' and cohesive community

Fifth, in line with the availability and use of local resources, we have seen that the Acholi have a spiritual world-view that puts in place an ideal framework

within which people can live as an 'integrated' and cohesive community. This integrated and cohesive community, as we have seen in chapters 3 and 5, has been disrupted by conflict generally but specifically by children's experiences in war. In fact, Igreja argues that 'local resources do not remain intact' when exposed to long periods of violence (2003: 460). Notwithstanding this, in the case of northern Uganda, the Acholi spiritual world-view offers broad opportunities for redressing the breakdown of communal cohesiveness through rituals. Examples of the use and appropriateness of some of the rituals at the societal and personal levels have been discussed above. Previously we argued that particular experiences of conflict were significant for the formerly abducted children. The above discussion on the use of traditional rituals reinforces the argument that the particularity of the war experiences of the children demand particular reintegration practices focused on the individual.

Finally, we have further learned that post-violence healing should not only address physical and psychosocial problems. Spirits become involved and cause illnesses, especially after killings and other violations have occurred. This finding is not only unique to northern Uganda. The studies by Honwana (2006), Tol *et al.* (2005) and Igreja (2003) in non-Western societies all attest to the involvement of spirits in illness beliefs in the context of violence. In our view, this calls for culture and context-specificity in healing people in the aftermath of their involvement in violence and conflict.

7.7 SCHOOLING AS A REINTEGRATION METHOD

Despite the contribution of the traditional rituals to reintegration, people still looked beyond these practices. From the children's stories, and also according to adults in focus group discussions, going back to school or already being in school was very important. Even at the institutional level, the reception centres focused on and actually sponsored some of the formerly abducted children in schools. Although it is not clear whether the emphasis on going back to school was an admission of the inadequacies of both the institutional and community-based reintegration practices, it is clear that schooling is a way of dealing with the past and imaging the future. As a result of these suggestions concerning school, especially by children and the community, we decided to locate and treat schooling and the school as part of the community-based reintegration practices. As the Woodrow Wilson School (2006: 12) states, the formerly abducted children 'have lost considerable time in their education due to the conflict, some up to seven or eight years, but continue to see formal education as an important goal in their lives'. As an action research oriented study, the focus of the research on school as a part of

the community was decided upon based on the cues given in the first phase of the research, where both the children and the elders, in addition to the reception centres, made continuous references to schooling. There is therefore good reason to understand the role of schooling in reintegration.

In their studies in South Africa, Mozambique and northern Uganda, the Woodrow Wilson School (2006) found schooling to be important for reintegration because it is a meaningful activity. To understand the importance of schooling and the experiences of the formerly abducted children while in school, I conducted focus group interviews with teachers, non-abducted children and formerly abducted children in six primary schools and one technical school. In each of the schools visited, separate focus group discussions were conducted with the three categories. Below we report the experiences recounted in these interviews.

7.7.1 Formerly abducted children and schooling

From the focus group discussions and interviews conducted in various schools, it was evident that the war children have a positive attitude towards schooling. The children love studying and going to school. During two focus group discussions with formerly abducted children in Anaka and the Youth Education Park Vocational School in Gulu municipality, the children had this to say in relation to how they feel about being in school:

RI: "I feel good because they are not saying anything about me."

R2: "Life is somehow easy. When I was in the bush I was not studying. In school here I feel good because they don't say anything bad about me. We are treated in the same way."

R3: "Here in the school I feel good. It is fine [in the class room]. This is a sure case that I have to be in the school for long. [if I get chances of progressing in studies] I know that I will feel a bit proud but not forever. Personally I feel I should not stop at the secondary level only. I would love it if I could go up to the university." (*Focus group discussion with formerly abducted children, Anaka Primary School*)

RI: "We stay well because there are many learners. When I was at home I used to think so much but now the school environment keeps us busy."

R2: "I am happy to be in school we are not stigmatized here. [We like to be in school] because we learn well and we are loved."

R3: "I like the school because the teachers love us."

R4: "We stay well. The teachers teach us well and encourage others to live well with us."

R5: "Here we are respected and no one talks ill of us. We are fed well. The teachers love us." (*Focus group discussion with formerly abducted children, YEP Vocational School*)

These statements by the formerly abducted children identify schooling as providing opportunities for better reintegration and citizenship and they dream about a better future and being respected. A positive attitude towards schooling is portrayed in their good performance in class. For example, of the seven children in one of the focus group discussions in Anaka Primary School, three of them had obtained no more than fourth place out of more than 100 pupils in their respective classes in their previous examination sessions. To confirm this good performance, the focus group discussion with teachers from Anaka Central also revealed that the children tried their best to catch up in class. However, a discussion with non-abducted pupils demonstrated that although the formerly abducted children do well in class they still tend to be aggressive and they can easily be provoked by small irritations:

RI: "It is easy [to study with them] but they have some strange ways of behaviour. They keep telling stories of killing."

R2: "Some are very rough and if you joke, they fight you." (*Focus group discussion with non-abducted children, Anaka Primary School*)

Comparing life in school and at home, the children preferred the former, where they feel that they are anonymous, with only their teachers knowing that they are former abductees. This also appears to emphasize the fact that they would rather have their past forgotten or erased if possible. From the discussions it appears that this anonymity is not possible within the community setting where everyone knows the former abductees and the children do not seem to be comfortable with this focus on them (see also chapters 8 and 9). In practical terms, the lack of anonymity is apparent, as the children complain that in the villages name-calling, stigmatisation and discrimination against them continues.

7.7.2 *Formerly abducted children and peers in school*

Concerning the attitude of other schoolchildren towards them, although the former abductees did not report major problems, they still intimated that some of their fellow pupils called them names. However, the dominant attitude towards them in school appears to be positive. The focus group discussion with non-abducted children reveals this positivity:

"We live well with them."

"They are also human beings."

"They were abducted by force."

These statements come from various focus groups discussions and reveal an understanding and sympathetic attitude from fellow pupils, who also said that they consider the formerly abducted children as friends and not soldiers.

Despite these positive sentiments there are also inner fears expressed by non-abducted children about the formerly abducted children. One boy in a focus group discussion in Lukome Primary School said that he would not have a formerly abducted girl as a girlfriend because he could not know for sure what she went through and how she lived in the bush and he feared he could get AIDS. The non-abducted children also pointed out that formerly abducted children do not like to be given advice and if, one persists, they become aggressive and sometimes threaten to kill you. The non-abducted children further mentioned that the formerly abducted children fear each other and that they are generally indifferent and isolated. In addition, these characteristics were also mentioned in a focus group discussion with the teachers of Anaka Central Primary School, who said that the school was not too keen on the children. Those whom the teachers were aware of were generally short-tempered, intolerant and used rough language. Teachers in St Martins School, Lukome suggested that the children similarly revealed a tendency to isolation and withdrawal from their peers:

RI: "The returnees sometimes find difficulties associating with other pupils. They also find difficulties associating with teachers because sometimes they are withdrawn, they isolate themselves. When you call them they don't easily respond to your call, so sometimes they respond but they are so fearful and we have been trying to see how to deal with them. That is not much, we are still struggling."

R2: "We first need to identify them and deal with them separately but we realized that they are afraid of putting themselves in groups because some pupils will begin saying these are groups of returnees."

7.7.3 *Formerly abducted children and teachers*

As teachers are the focus point of learning they are an important factor in the lives of the formerly abducted children in the school environment, therefore we also sought to understand the attitude of the teachers towards them. From the focus group discussions with the formerly abducted children, the non-abducted children and the teachers themselves we learned that the formerly abducted children enjoy support from their teachers. As one teacher said:

"We look at them as our own children."

And the head teacher also said:

"We have an all inclusive education system."

This means that the formerly abducted children are not discriminated against while at Anaka Primary School.

Just as the children expressed more difficulties in living within the community than at school, as we saw in the previous discussion, the teachers also expressed concern that the children were stigmatized more in the community, where they are seen as the people who have caused all the suffering over the years. Nevertheless, the teachers argued that the community is more sympathetic to the younger children (especially those born in captivity) who may not have committed atrocities. The older children were generally viewed with suspicion and as guilty of the horrendous crimes and atrocities committed against the community while the conflict was at its height.

Focus group discussions with the teachers and the pupils again show that in some primary schools there were no special activities, such as counselling, organized for the formerly abducted children. When I further inquired from Terrence, one of my research assistants, who is himself a teacher working in the context of 'special services' for children in schools in urban areas, his opinion was that there are more of these children in urban schools and thus a greater need to attend to them in these schools. However, my own opinion is that there is an issue of unequal service provision between urban and rural areas/schools. Teachers in urban areas have had the opportunity to access special-needs training from NGOs, who are mostly urban based and cannot provide the same services to teachers in rural areas, either due to insecurity or lack of resources. However, in one of our feedback discussions, Charles, whose official duties include overseeing the humanitarian activities taking place in Gulu district, insisted that there was a programme organized to train all teachers in the district to help them to deal with the large number of returned children presently in schools. On this occasion he also cautioned us about the opportunistic tendencies of the conflict-afflicted community in general in regard to providing information. He considered that it was possible that people might present a picture that suggests that they are in a situation of greater need, since anyone gathering information would be perceived to be better placed and in a position to help; in our case perhaps to influence activities in relation to the training of teachers.

7.7.4 Formerly abducted children, school activities and the need for support in schooling

Although the formerly abducted children were considered to be indifferent, isolated and often aggressive, discussions with them and the teachers revealed that they were fully involved and enjoyed physical and extra-curricular activities at school. They enjoyed games and sports, music, dance and drama. Perhaps this relates to their overly active life in captivity, where they were always on the move, on the battlefield, looting and carrying heavy luggage. In their turn, despite not mentioning specific social difficulties at school, most

formerly abducted children suggested that the difficulties they have with schooling relate to their family experiences. Most said their parents could not afford the things they needed to attend school, such as fees and books, as they have lived as internally displaced persons for a very long time. Some of the formerly abducted children who had lost both parents and were living with other relatives did not receive enough love and support in their life. For instance, during the focus group discussions, one of the children told us of how her stepmother often refuses to give her food, makes her work very hard and also denied her basic necessities. Her main source of food was the school-feeding programme that provided lunch at school.

Considering these problems, the focus group discussions with the formerly abducted children and the non-abducted children clearly suggested that there is a need for continued psychosocial and material support for the returned children. The main thing that became apparent was that the NGOs no longer provided follow-up as they had in the beginning. Teachers at St Martin's Lukome shed some light on this:

RI: "The abductees need to be supported. For those in the school, financial assistance could be given. For those who have been through World Vision after returning home they could be sent to vocational training school so that they get skills that will help them so when they are released to go home they could fend for themselves."

R2: "My opinion is not far from his suggestion. For those who have returned there should be follow-up because after receiving help from donors nobody cares and yet they will have promised heaven to them while still in the rehabilitation centres. The child after waiting for long will begin to say these had promised me school fees and now they are not there. I think no one is caring about me. I better drop out of school. After dropping out of school again the child goes home and finds that there is no place for him/her. At the school things are not easy; even in the community things are not easy because the child has been tuned already, has been promised something and that thing has not been really provided so there is a real need for proper follow-up." (*Focus group discussion St Martin's School, Lukome*)

Other informal discussions with the teachers, however, mentioned the existence of a few sponsorship programmes through some NGOs. These use the LC system to identify the needy children, which may not be the most efficient way to determine the educational needs of the formerly abducted children. It was further suggested that use of the LC system is fraught with corruption in terms of who has access to the scholarships and any other assistance.

These findings affirm the importance attached to schooling and being in school for the reintegration process, as found by the Woodrow Wilson School (2006). The experiences of peers and teachers of formerly abducted

children in schools in this study show that the latter still suffer from the effects of their traumatic experiences, apparent in characteristics such as withdrawal, hostility, aggression and isolation, as also found by Betancourt (2008). Hill and Langholtz (2003) observe several problems, such as changes in personality and behaviour patterns, debatable moral standards and aggressive behaviour which is used to solve problems, all seen in war children during the reintegration process. Nonetheless, the general supportive environment that was found to prevail in the schools in this study did offer the children the motivation to participate as members of the school community. However, socioeconomic difficulties, including a requirement for support in relation to the costs of schooling, also mean that more careful consideration of the issue must be made. Care also needs to be taken in the conflict and post-conflict setting in providing such support, because even non-abducted school-going children face similar difficulties in relation to on-going access to schooling.

7.8 CHALLENGES TO COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES AND TRADITIONAL RITUALS AS REINTEGRATION

Thus far our discussion shows that there are both positive elements and tensions involved in community-based reintegration initiatives and rituals, including schooling. The positive elements differ for each individual according to their experiences and what is available to them, but can generally be identified as the willingness of the children to have positive experiences of reintegration, their ability to return to school and function in organized groups and participate in productive ventures, their hard-working traits and the availability of traditional rituals. These positive signs are good points of departure for considering the means to achieve the long-term reintegration of the formerly abducted children.

7.8.1 *The damaged condition of the children and the broken community*

The tensions surrounding reintegration in the community, however, mainly relate to the damaged condition of the formerly abducted children. There are difficult issues, including aggression, violence, difficulties with acceptable social behaviour and nightmares to deal with. Other tensions are related to continuing warfare and/or the post-war situation, both of which create desperation and helplessness and hinder effective reintegration, in addition to difficulties in obtaining social and material support associated with schooling. The disempowering effects of the war pose serious challenges to community-based reintegration practices.

Associated with this is the dislocation of the social setting within which reintegration has to occur. The dislocation can be viewed at two levels. First there is the displacement of communities into the camps, in which the communally integrated life described in chapter 3 previously is negated. The cramped and poverty-stricken conditions under which people live in the camps may not allow for community-based initiatives and/or the performance of traditional rituals. The second dislocation occurred during the later stages of the conflict as people attempted to return to their original villages. Paradoxically, this reverse migration, rather than ensuring the performance of the rituals, created another hindrance to their performance as it led to worsening poverty and a further lack of property. Under such conditions, scholastic materials, for example, may also no longer be a priority. Families will allocate their meagre resources to their immediate survival needs, such as food and housing. The children's longer term reintegration needs, such as the performance of *mat oput*, are likely to be relegated to a time when less scarce resources can be spared for ritual and communal performances.

7.8.2 *The receding role of the elders*

Another challenge is the gradually receding importance and role of the elders and tradition in modern society. As we have seen in this chapter, the community-based reintegration initiatives, especially the traditional rituals, are rooted in tradition and culture. According to Baines (2005), sociopolitical changes from colonial times to the present have meant that the institution of the elders has, over time, been replaced by other political and governance structures imposed by the state, such as the *rwot kalam* in the colonial and immediate post-independence eras. We add that these changes have continued through the role played by local councillors in the Museveni era. However, we would like to further add that the war conditions may well have contributed to the decreasing importance of the elders. What these changes imply is that the cultural and traditional bank of expertise and knowledge needed for the practice of traditional rituals is less than adequate. However, perhaps as a response to this, we observed a renewed interest in the revival of what the Acholi 'used to do' in circumstances of social disharmony.

7.8.3 *Modernization*

Coupled with the receding importance of the institution of the elders is the growing importance of modernizing tendencies. Our findings reveal a tension between traditional rituals and modernity. According to Baines, 'mechanisms for socializing Acholi youth about social rights and wrongs and about traditional rituals and beliefs have been challenging obstacles in displacement camps' (2005: 18), and thus for reintegration. Thus, the elders, who should help in the reintegration of ex-abductees, find themselves and their knowledge

'irrelevant' in a situation exacerbated by war, where the tradition and culture they know and represent is accorded less relevance. Religious beliefs, especially Christian religious beliefs, have been identified by both Baines (2005) and Harlacher *et al.* (2006) as a major hindrance to the use of traditional cultural practices for reintegration. They argue that some Christian families have rejected traditional cultural practices related to reintegration as satanic. This point of view was also observed in the stories told by some of the formerly abducted children and recounted in the section on religion, modernity and rituals above. Honwana (2006: 119) found similar influences of modernization on cultural practices in Mozambique and Angola:

Sometimes returned young combatants are not comfortable immersing themselves in these cultural and religious traditions. Some see such actions as a return to the old ways – a world of tradition and gerontocracy – and aspire to a more modern outlook on life.

Nonetheless, just as we found in this study, in a time of adversity and in the context of villages and communities of origin, young people in Mozambique submitted to local practices because of the need to be accepted and pardoned in view of their participation in war.

7.8.4 Loss of parents

In addition to all of the above, families destroyed by war and the accompanying disintegrating family values add their own problems in relation to this process. Returning home to find oneself an orphan or being rejected by living relatives increased the likelihood that a returnee would not have anyone to perform the rituals for them. This in a way emphasizes the extent of the disintegration and dislocation of the communities to which the children return and in which community reintegration is a big challenge. In the integrated Acholi community of the past, orphans benefited from the in-built welfare system and no living relative would reject them. However, modern society has become more individualistic, exacerbated by the conflict, with orphans, in this case formerly abducted children, having less support for their reintegration needs. The story of a female formerly abducted child illustrates this:

“I met this girl when she was 14. One day when she was 9, she and her parents were sitting under a mango tree on their compound when the rebels arrived. The rebels tied her father and threw him down. They told her to get the axe her father had just used for chopping wood and use it for chopping her father’s head. The girl refused. The rebels threatened to kill her instead. Her father told her to do what she had been asked to do so that she could live. She complied. After that she and her mother were then tied and told to follow the rebels to the bush. On the way, the mother was released and sent

back home but she never reached home; she met another rebel group that killed her. Meanwhile the girl continued to walk with the rebel group that had abducted her.

When 3 years later she escaped from the rebels and returned home, she did not know that her mother had been killed the day they parted. Her grandfather did not want to see her, accusing her of killing his son (the girl's own father). The grandfather told her to get married and take care of herself. When I met this girl, she was a student in a boarding school receiving tuition fees from one of the Christian NGOs. For other needs she depended on the good will of other people. During holidays she would go to one of the camps and live there on her own depending on the food given by the WFP."

7.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter presented the community-based reintegration practices being used in northern Uganda, including community initiatives, rituals and schooling. Community-based resources such as the children's own ability to work hard, a community capacity for acceptance and a positive attitude were discussed as being vital to long-term reintegration. In addition, other community-based activities related to livelihoods such as brick-laying, tailoring, gardening and more social activities such as getting married were also discussed. The findings show, however, that there are challenges facing the reintegration of formerly abducted children, such as stigmatization, nightmares and fear, and the difficulties of living with these children. Furthermore, we have seen the importance of traditional rituals that are rooted in the Acholi spiritual world-view for reintegration. The findings reveal that the need for traditional rituals arises due to the war experiences of the formerly abducted children, which can cause disharmony at the personal, community and intergenerational levels. This chapter also discussed the importance attached by the formerly abducted children and the community to going back to school and its relevance to the reintegration process. This shows the importance of education for the community in addition to the social and economic opportunities it offers in the long run. We found that all of these community-based reintegration practices face challenges due to a broken community, the decreasing role of the elders and the process of modernization.

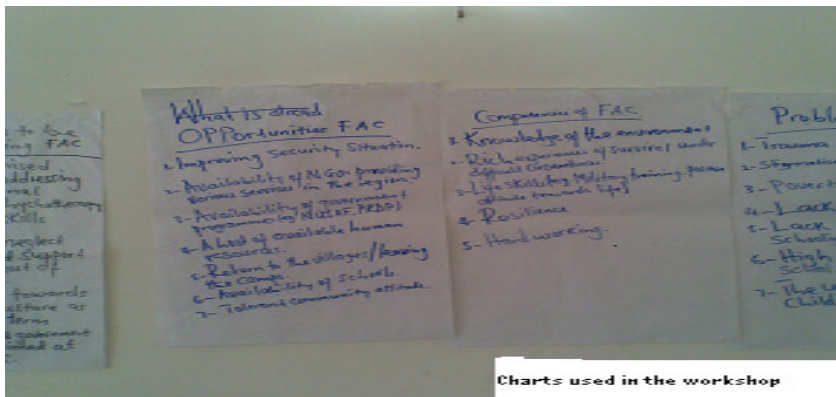


Work groups in the workshop

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“We appreciate the skills training but we think it is inadequate. After three months we are not able to produce products that can compete in quality to the products in the market”
(Presentation from formerly abducted children in the workshop)

“Support should be given to those who were not abducted and yet they failed to continue with their studies because of the war. Many times they are not happy with us because they are not supported and yet suffered with us”
(Presentation from formerly abducted children in the workshop)



Charts used in the workshop

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