Introduction

The September 2012 issue on Conflict Watch represents and provides the Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS) – Refugee Law Project (RLP) contextual analysis and situational updates relating to peace and economic recovery in Northern Uganda. This issue emphasizes that, despite economic and political interest dictating physical reconstruction of infrastructures and service delivery, it is also imperative that human consequences of violence – the memories and experiences of the people involved are attended to, and that ownerships of actions taken to address the consequence of conflict should be embedded in the communities working for peace and development. ACCS makes concerted effort towards flagging conflict causes, triggers, actors as well as early warnings.

Key titles in the issue include:

1) How can Northern Uganda sustain the hard earned peace: A reflection on the International Peace Day celebration
2) BUDS project making recovery a possibility in northern Uganda
3) Social entrepreneurship: a missing link in post conflict recovery process
4) Psychological reconstruction and post conflict recovery: Anger management and dealing with the past in northern Uganda.

HOW CAN NORTHERN UGANDA SUSTAIN THE HARD EARNED PEACE: A REFLECTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY CELEBRATION

In China there is a saying that “if you have not fought with each other, you do not know each other”. This saying should inform our conscience in understanding the nexus between peace and conflict, in this case no matter what comes first, whether peace...
or conflict, they all impact on the community and humanity. Rather, like seeing images in a picture, many different individuals had differing viewpoint about northern Uganda, and in particular the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebellion. Various assumptions and theoretical causations were raised as subject of discussion whether perceived or real they were useful in understanding the reason behind the LRA rebellion.

Peace has become essential to recovery and development of Northern Uganda, a region which is emerging from over two decades of conflict waged between the Government of Uganda and the rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The civil war which started in 1986 had disastrous impact on the population of entire Northern Uganda, with spillover effects to West Nile and Eastern Districts of Uganda. Between 35,000 children were abducted by the LRA, and over 1.8 million people were displaced and forced to live in squalid conditions in internally Displaced Camps (IDP).

Following a period of intense conflict and violence, efforts were instituted by the Government of Uganda and Civil Society Organisations to resolve the conflict through facilitated negotiations and mediations, key amongst this was the Juba peace talks of 2006 which resulted into consequential signing of numerous agreements between the conflicting parties. Rather, most significantly was the Cessation of Hostility Agreement. This was a platform which sowed peace and marked reduction in violence in Northern Uganda and paved way for peace, recovery and development process of Northern Uganda.

In commemoration of the International Day of Peace situated for September 21st 2012, various agencies and institution took part in Gulu district. The Northern Uganda Youth Development Centre (NUYDC) in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister and the UK – Department for International Development (DFID) commemorated the day by highlighting the impact of peace to the youth of Northern Uganda. The commemoration was situated to acknowledge the benefits derived from the just achieved peace and in particular re-engaging youth into a productive force, a role which NUYDC is undertaking with funding support from UK-DFID. The NUYDC has embarked on a post conflict training support programme of providing youth with business skills and mentorship. This bid is to increase and improve on human capital and employment opportunities.

At the district level, the International Day of Peace was celebrated on the 19th September, 2012 at Kaunda Ground, Gulu Municipality. Various dignitaries were present and of importance was the
Archbishop John Baptist Odama and the winner of the International Peace Price Award. The World Vision International Peacemaking price was in recognition of the role played by the Archbishop in peacemaking in Northern Uganda. The theme of the day was “Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future”. This illustrates and confirms a shift from peacemaking to peace-building. In the words of the Chairman Gulu District Local Government “we are now in the peace-building phase of our long journey from conflict. The officers and men of the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF) took the lead in the peace making phase of our journey; our religious leaders and elected politicians took the lead in the peace making phase. The question now before us is: who will take the lead in this peace-building phase? Who will be our peace-builders?”

The questions relay directly to the issue of sustainable peace in post conflict northern Uganda and what should be done to avoid reversion to violent conflict. Implying that we need to understand with entirety what to do as peace-builders. At this point the peace-building approach to be adopted in the north should aim at not only addressing conflict behaviors, but also the underlying context and attitudes that give rise to violence, such as unequal access to employment, discrimination and exclusion, unacknowledged and unforgiven responsibility for the past crimes, and so on. These are national issues that the state should pick it up. Implying peace building is a process, that is holistic and aim at transforming violence.

The danger is that many societies and communities in the north are excluded from a range of economic, political and social factors. Peace is often compared to health, in that it is more easily recognized by its absence. Like health, all have to access it. However, unlike health it is contested: people disagree over what a peaceful society is. Many people in the north understand peace to be the absence of war, as this is of course important, others see it as a step towards peace – building. The north as it is now is just relatively peaceful, the reasons are obvious and some of these reasons includes; land disputes and conflict in the entire northern Uganda including some West Nile districts; youth unemployment; the “nodding” disease and poor health services in Kitgum, Pader, Lamwo and Gulu district. Other general problems includes; increasing school dropout in particular in Lamwo, armed robbery, witchcraft, unattended plight of teachers, health workers and army veterans.

In other words, dealing with consequences of violence requires reflection, analysis and time of the past and what the present and the future should be. There are no quick fix solutions, and each and every one must find the necessary tools and processes most suitable to each and single conflict contexts, violence and involve others in pursuing a resolution or solution.

Refugee Law Project contribution towards sustainable peace and peace-building has been through ongoing contextual analysis of the overall recovery process of Northern Uganda (focusing on conflict indicators, issues and dynamics), and early warning as and when necessary. It is within this context that Refugee Law Project flashes out key post conflict recovery challenges and early warnings
to various stakeholders. We recommend that; the Government of Uganda should urgently improve the functionality of existing health facilities and where necessary establish new ones; strengthen and support land administration authorities through trainings on land management and dispute resolution as well increasing staffing in particular the judiciary (magistrates) to resolve land matters and other pressing recovery challenges.

**BUDS PROJECT MAKING RECOVERY A POSSIBILITY IN NORTHERN UGANDA**

“This money is honestly free, I must get my share before it is done”, says a male adult in a meeting hosted by PSFU in Bomah, Gulu.

A highly anomalous situation occurred on the 18th of September, 2012, when the Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU) held a dissemination session at Bomah Hotel in Gulu district. The session was motivated by the need to clarify on the alleged challenges that locals face in accessing Business Uganda Development Scheme (BUDS) fund. The session was attended by a number of individuals with varied business interest, what was surprising was that there were just a handful of youth. The BUDS cumulative grant support is a maximum of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Pounds Sterling (£250,000) per qualifying enterprise; unfortunately, many individuals are not taking advantage of utilizing this grant says the Executive Director of PSFU.

Previous experiences and failures have resulted into what can now be called as a turnaround strategy aimed at minimizing mismanagement of funds. This strategy to which many locals concur with to be effective is being applied by the Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU), Business Uganda Development Scheme (BUDS). The PSFU – BUDS modality is that; it only advances 50% advance payment for all business development services and skills development activities, and another 50% on completion of the activity to service provider(s); for all capital investment related activities, the scheme advances its contribution directly to the client’s chosen suppliers; in doing so some level of commitment, effectiveness and efficiency is achieved, most importantly and what provides assurance is the willing of the human resource at PSFU to help guide an individual through the entire process of accessing the grant.

This piece relay issues relating to economic revitalization of communities in post conflict environment and how it is being done through the BUDS grant, and why it has the potential of succeeding and transforming lives. Historically, post –conflict recovery in Northern Uganda has not been impressive because most programmes have not been sustainable and able to transform the lives of the people. This as alleged has been due to mismanagement of project funds and the technicality involved in applying for funding by beneficiaries, a case in point has been the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSA F1).

BUDS-DFID gave out 21 tractors and farming implements to 13 farmer groups in Northern Uganda recently.
Despite the opportunity being provided by the UK- Department for International Development (DFID) - BUDS funded project and grant, millions of people in Northern Uganda still lavish in poverty. How do we then give hope to these millions of people living in a post conflict recovery context with the need for sustainable peace and economic deliverance? Rather, to respond to this, enlightened compassion and directed self interest has been the core in directing influences and the need to contribute towards the recovery of northern Uganda by numerous international donor agencies. The UK – through the Post Conflict Development Programme (PCDP) strongly rally behind the Peace Recovery Development Programme (PRDP) and the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).

The UK PCDP supports the Government of Uganda to deliver immediate benefits of peace and promote the long-term transformation of northern Uganda through; enhancing local government (LG) capacity for equitable service delivery; promoting private sector-led growth, investment and employment; providing basic literacy to youth, and skills training; delivering targeted social protection; and establishing Government of Uganda structures to support national reconciliation. All these have been intended to reverse and address the shocks of the effects of the two decade war that affected the region. The question is why does the north still lag behind, the rest of the country?

Contextually, the conventional approach and it consequential dilemma can best explain poor performances of recovery programmes in the north. One of these challenges is the issue of acceptance of development programmes and the political question, in other words it is politics that influences how projects and programmes are received. This dilemma affected the implementation of Peace Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP) Phase I which was said to have been highly politicised. To some proponents it turns out that laziness and lack of access to information is a huge challenge to post conflict recovery and development.

The BUDS fund is equally accessible to all, including the youth and this has the potential to increase the number of rural enterprises and employment opportunities in northern Uganda. Unfortunately, community participation and involvement has been ear-marked as minimal, and for a number of reasons it is linked to dependency and the perception that many locals prefer to have quick fix solutions to their problems. Wider and broader information dissemination as was conducted by PSFU provides a forum through which people from the north can benefit and acquire the pre-requisite information necessary to enable them benefit from BUDS grant projects. The challenge has been that many individuals do not turn up for such forums and end up being excluded, yet they cannot be coerced to attend.

In essence, attitudes, behavior and systems play a critical role in the successful engagement of the locals in any post conflict recovery programme. Failure of the individuals penetrating through the systems and becoming part of the system, presents a risk of developing discontent and conflict regardless of the political motivations. The reality is to reverse the sequence. In this case, PSFU should be highly recommended and supported in information dissemination, as the locals are encouraged to take initiatives to become beneficiaries.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE MISSING LINK IN POST CONFLICT RECOVERY PROCESS.

Despite the fully blown implementation of
Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), significant number of individuals and section of Ugandans are still concerned about the recovery and development terrain of Northern Uganda. Much as the implementation of PRDP has its own challenges, it offers great remedial and progress opportunity to the victimized population within the affected districts/regions of Northern Uganda. With the evolution of entrepreneurship development in Uganda, PRDP may be looked at as a post conflict governmental enterprise designed to revamp the economy and human capital of the districts that were affected by the Lord’s resistance army conflict.

Over time, PRDP has been criticized for putting strong emphasis on ‘hardware’, such as rehabilitating infrastructures more than focusing on ‘softwares’, such as psychological rehabilitation and reconciliation amongst others. Looking at some daunting conflict drivers in Uganda as a whole, specifically youth unemployment, that pose a security threat, the government of Uganda continued to develop and implement turnaround plan by for example initiating the Youth Venture Capital, with strict and complicated guideline/criteria the scheme offers very little window of opportunity for the overwhelming number of the ever growing unemployed youth attempting to access the funds.

For the case of Gulu district, it is alleged that only one person managed to access the youth venture fund since it was initiated and this has brought overwhelming outcry on this relevant project that pose irrelevant to the many desperate youth. The repercussion is great, resulting into involvement of youths in dubious acts and conflict with the law, and distrust of the state by the youth who feel that their plight is not being attended to. Analytically, the youth venture fund is not very far from PRDP, though a clear difference is that the economic component of this project would support engagement in business for the purpose of earning income and profit that can easily transform one’s life. These two projects seems to be failing in appreciating the social niche of the communities disintegrated by wars and other social problems in the north thereby making the locals to operate in unfriendly environment, with high risk potentials of incurring losses and failures.

With such background, it is imperative for the government of Uganda and other stakeholders to initiate and embark social entrepreneurship to support individuals deeply fractured by wars to value collective productivity in post conflict situations. Social entrepreneurship is the exercise of creativity, innovation and taking responsibility to recognize daunting social problems/issues affecting the society/community and application of entrepreneurial principles and values to organize, create, manage and develop social venture to achieve desired social changes whose benefits to the society can be measured.

It is important to recognise the increasing government support to entrepreneurship as a means of helping citizens confront social ills like unemployment, and abating security concerns that potentially can destabilize peace. The dilemma is that such initiatives may not achieve its desired goals if the emphasis is on supporting the profit-making ventures and infrastructural refurbishment, without bolt emphasis on subjects that unite people to join hands in the peace and development process.

For the case of northern Uganda, many people have not yet gotten to terms with their violent past and the alleged/actual perpetrators have not yet fully
reconciled with one another to ensure harmonious support and co-existence. The unhealed post war challenges such as land conflicts, fears, traumas, armed robbery, theft and burglary, and arson, to mention but a few, have huge impact and potentials of impeding business growth and development of business enterprises in the region.

It is then imperative to understand the status of peace in the region and whether or not the conflict affected persons in northern Uganda are prepared to engage in productive sustainable business. Thus, social entrepreneurship is key for supporting the growth and development of business enterprises, as well as peace and recovery processes in the north. It’s also relevant for supporting the community members reconcile and learn to engage or transact in productive life saving and developmental ventures that are paramount for prosperity and peace building. Rather, social entrepreneurs are change agents who can seize missed opportunities, improve on systems functionality and productivity by developing creative approaches to change and social transformation.

Stakeholders should learn to appreciate and venture into social enterprise development and provide solutions to social problems with improved socialization, re-integration of war victims and survivors, communal engagement and support, sharing resources, prosperity for all, tolerance, unity, attitude for belonging, ownership, peace, recovery and development by and for all. This will help address the conflict drivers that pose detrimental to PRDP and other sustainable peace building processes. All in all, the government and other stakeholders should appreciate and venture into social entrepreneurship to support economic enterprise development in conflict affected communities and Uganda as a whole.

PSYCHOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND POST CONFLICT RECOVERY: ANGER MANAGEMENT AND DEALING WITH THE PAST IN NORTHERN UGANDA.

The bitter heart eats its owners – Xhosa saying in South Africa

For about 5 years Benard has been engaging in research on forced migration, and my recent engagement and analogy of conflict drivers, triggers and developmental challenges. Previously, in engaged in a comprehensive comparative study on National Reconciliation and Transitional Justice in 10 districts across Uganda. During the study, I established that there is a very particular and indispensable aspect of humanity that shapes peaceful coexistence amongst individuals in a society has been left unattended to by the government and Civil Society Organizations. That element is anger.

Anger is a basic human emotion that is experienced by all mankind and is always triggered by emotional hurt that can either boil up instantly or emanate from memory of dark past retrieved. This is psychological and helping individuals or masses appropriately deal with anger and emotions after violence is a major challenge given the inadequacy and huge lack of services along that spectrum in the country. The conflict-sensitive approach is therefore how to manage anger at individual and collective levels to support dialogue, reconciliation processes, tolerance, forgiveness, unity, love, harmonious co-existence and peace building processes in this nation bedevilled by enduring legacies of conflicts.

The fact that a human being is an emotional being does not mean that differences must be solved through the exercise of masculinity and power, or that humans are completely unable to come to terms with extreme negative emotions that propel
them to rebel against others (or the government), wage wars, incite violence, preach revolutionary gospels or even commit suicide or other self-afflicting behaviours. However, addressing such dynamics in culture and context specific, it is therefore important like any other area of development and recovery spheres.

In Uganda's history, we have seen instances where anger has been manifested in manners that caused national anarchy and insecurity. Consider the storming of the Kabaka's Palace in 1966, post-independence violent regime changes, armed rebellions, violent riots, land wrangles in Northern Uganda (for example, in Apaa, Lakang and Elegu), mob justice, revenge after conflicts, clan conflicts and domestic violence in Uganda. One realises that anger and the expression of related emotions has had a great impact in disintegrating people and destabilizing peace at all levels in Uganda.

Ugandan leaders and politicians, who should be role models to the people they lead, have often been caught in emotional tantrums that caused shock and anxiety and eventually dragged their followers into their anger pool, sparking chaos, violence and mass resistance. Also, on the grassroots level, unexamined anger is an obstacle for properly rehabilitating and reintegrating formerly abducted persons and affected communities. These examples demonstrate the need to understand further the energy of anger and the challenge of addressing its impacts.

Clearly, anger management is vital in the quest for promoting sustainable peace and development, and it should be viewed beyond just controlling emotions but also in terms of developing positive attitudes, resilience and skills that can effectively improve relationships. At a personal level, learning simple anger management skills such as breathing and relaxation exercises, reducing the amount of stress, recognizing anger triggers, taking time to cool down, taking time to react, evaluating consequences of decisions and actions, counselling, discussions, acknowledgement and apology amongst others can provide support as one copes and deals with anger.

The major challenge for Uganda has been how to address collective grievances that emanate from politics, tribalism, social and economic exclusion, corruption all of which are - governance deficits, unresolved past wrongs and ignorance about using self-help skills to peacefully resolve anger and address differences amicably. Negative attitudes toward counselling cause many people to view it as an activity for only mad or mentally sick people; others feel that dialoguing with people in conflict is a weakness or failure which is fallacious.

As a country, we need to develop models and practical approaches to address and manage anger based on our history, experience, emerging and current issues, and context as we seek towards recovery. However, given the current Ugandan journey to innovation and creativity, it becomes strategically imperative to stimulate the citizens to generate ideas, debates, pragmatic studies and practices on anger management and analyse its implication on peace, recovery and development processes in northern Uganda.

In a nutshell, a holistic nationwide campaign on anger management is needed, targeting all sections of the Ugandan population. The Ministry of Ethics and Integrity and other relevant ministries should initiate programs and policies geared towards understanding and shaping human emotions/anger. National curriculum design needs to integrate anger management modules in school/institution syllabi.
Decisions that affect citizens should not be made out of emotion, but through impartial processes involving clear minds and clear intentions. This requires a review of decision-making at all levels. Masculinity and femininity programs should be initiated to address gender-related anger.

**About Refugee Law Project (RLP)**
The Refugee Law Project (RLP) seeks to ensure fundamental human rights for all, including; asylum seekers, refugees, and internally displaced persons within Uganda. RLP envision a country that treats all people within its borders with the same standards of respect and social justice.

**About Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS)**
The Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS) is a three member consortium that brings together, Refugee Law Project, International Alert and Saferworld. The overall aim of ACCS is assisting DFID and partners in strengthening the potential of the PCDP and recovery process to address the causes of conflict and contribute to sustainable peace and stability. Under ACCS, RLP is leading on contextual analysis of the overall recovery process (focusing on conflict indicators, issues and dynamics), and early warning as and when necessary.

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