

Forgiveness:

Unveiling an Asset for Peacebuilding



Refugee Law Project
2015

**The Center for
Civil & Human Rights**
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Forgiveness: Unveiling an Asset for Peacebuilding

A research conducted through a partnership between
Refugee Law Project and the Center for Civil and Human
Rights



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Preface

The research for this report was conducted through a partnership between the Center for Civil and Human Rights at the University of Notre Dame (USA), and Refugee Law Project of the School of Law at Makerere University, a leading civil society stakeholder in Uganda in research on justice in the context of armed conflict. Daniel Philpott, Director of the Center for Civil and Human Rights at Notre Dame, was the lead researcher. Sponsoring and collaborating closely in the research was the Fetzer Institute. Several NGOs joined the project as partners in individual districts. The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) provided strong support in Gulu. The Soroti Development Association & NGOs Network proved a valuable partner in Amuria. The MAYANK Development Association (MDA) supported our efforts in Yumbe. The John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre (JPC) in Kasese was instrumental to our work there. The Community Development and Child Welfare Initiatives (CODI) contributed to the project in Luwero and also provided invaluable feedback through this report's validation process. The sponsors of the report are grateful for the support of the staff at the Refugee Law Project, including Stephen Oola who coordinated the research in Uganda, Komakech Lyandro, Eunice Ouko, Dieudonne Maganya, and others; the staff of the Center for Civil and Human Rights, including Jody Klontz and Kevin Fye; and Dr. Juan Carlos Guzman of the Institute for Global Engagement at the University of Notre Dame, who provided extensive support in conducting the survey electronically. We also offer our heartfelt thanks to the team of researchers from each of five districts who carried out the focus group discussions and the survey. These include Joyce Abalo, Evelyn Akullu Gorretty Ameja, Monica Apilo, Ritah Apio, Tabitha Avola, Moses Bakole, Enos Baluku, Pauline Bamugaya, Robert Emoito, Deus Kule, Jesse Mugero, Enoch Muhindo, Josephine Nabakooza, Swadi Namuga, Innocent Okot, Eunice Ouko, Adiga Rasul, Gilbert Wachal, and Jimmy Wamimbi.

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List of Acronyms

ADF	Allied Democratic Front
ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
CODI	Community Development and Child Welfare Initiative
FEDEMU	Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda
FOBA	Force Obote Back Again
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
JPC	Justice and Peace Centre
JRP	Justice and Reconciliation Project
LRA	Lords Resistance Army
MDA	MAYANK Development Association
NALU	National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRA	National Resistance Army
RLP	Refugee Law Project
UFM	Uganda Freedom Movement
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UNRF	Uganda National Rescue Front
UPF/A	Uganda Peoples Front/Army
WNBF	West Nile Bank Front
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

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Executive Summary

Ugandans approve of and practice forgiveness widely in the wake of armed conflict. If widely practiced, promoted and complemented with appropriate transitional justice mechanisms, forgiveness can be a strong asset for peace-building.

This is true despite the widespread perception among Ugandans that peace in their country is fragile and negative, insofar as overt violence is absent but the conditions of justice and development are not present. Uganda remains hobbled by weaknesses in its political system, disputes over land and other property, a lack of development aid, the breakdown of family systems, and a lack of implementation of appropriate transitional justice measures like trials, truth commissions, reparations, apologies, and memorialization.

Ugandans regard forgiveness not merely as a matter of relinquishing claims against their perpetrators, but also as one of constructing a better relationship with them. The degree of restoration varies greatly. For instance, it is quite common for victims to speak of forgiving “in the heart” perpetrators who are not present.

Ugandans voice support for forgiveness at high rates despite the fact that a range of other measures, including repentance, truth-telling, acknowledgment of wrongs, apology, accountability, compensation, reparations, and development aid are widely absent.

Six broad motivations for forgiveness are identified: religion, tribal traditions, family traditions, the desire for psychological peace, the quest for peace in the community at large, and a recognition of the complexity of perpetrators’ motives. While religious leaders, especially those with strong moral authority, are strong advocates of forgiveness, few Ugandans described feeling pressured to forgive by religious leaders.

Most personal characteristics correlated weakly with forgiveness. It matters little, for instance, whether one is male or female as to whether one forgives. Among religions, Protestant non-mainline Christians forgave at unusually high rates, while support for forgiveness correlates with the

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frequency of prayer. The relationship between the period of time since the act of violence and the decision to forgive was ambiguous, and rates of forgiveness varied from region and region. Age, income and education were not correlated with forgiveness.

Our chief recommendation is that those involved in the work of peace-building, whether in an official governmental or a non-governmental capacity, incorporate forgiveness actively into their work. Because forgiveness is best promoted through teaching and example and is undermined when it becomes pressured, programmed, or scripted, it is best promoted by civil society organizations, both religious and secular. Family and traditional rituals are also forums where forgiveness can be taught and practiced. Forgiveness ought to be incorporated into transitional justice practices as well. Political, religious, and tribal leaders can be especially strong advocates of forgiveness, especially when they carry moral authority and practice forgiveness by example.

Introduction

Within the international community – international lawyers, human rights activists, officials of international organizations, and the staff of NGOs focused on peace-building – forgiveness is little understood, widely ignored, and often overshadowed by other activities thought to be more urgent. In certain countries, though, forgiveness has been practiced widely among the population and has been an important factor for building peace in the aftermath of armed conflict. One of these is Uganda.

This report explores the potential of forgiveness for building peace in the case of Uganda. Uganda is known around the world as the site of the first indictments handed down by the International Criminal Court (ICC), most famously that of Joseph Kony, the notorious leader of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The apprehension and trial of Kony in the ICC were the central recommendations of the internet video, *Kony 2012*, which was produced by a western NGO and elicited over 100 million hits.

The practice of forgiveness in Uganda has garnered no such global publicity. Ordinary Ugandans, however, are far more familiar with it. Forgiveness has been a major theme, for instance, in the pronouncements of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, a group of Ugandan religious leaders whose activities paved the way for negotiations to an end to 25 years of war in Northern Uganda between the LRA and government forces. As our study shows, forgiveness also has been widely practiced and favored among ordinary Ugandans who have suffered armed violence.

The war in the north cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of Uganda, which has seen over 44 armed conflicts since independence in 1962. If forgiveness is widespread in Uganda, it ought to be observable across the country. Our research indeed shows that forgiveness has been strong in each of the five diverse districts represented in our study. Uganda, then, can serve as a laboratory whose results are relevant for peace-building around the world.

The questions that motivate the study are designed to investigate and comprehend the multiple dimensions of forgiveness as practiced by

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victims in the wake of armed conflict, both in its particularity and in its wider relevance.

- » To what extent do Ugandans favor forgiveness in the wake of large-scale political violence in their attitudes?
- » To what extent do Ugandans practice forgiveness in the wake of large-scale political violence?
- » What do Ugandans understand forgiveness to involve in terms of words, actions, and interaction with perpetrators of violence?
- » Under what circumstances do Ugandans believe that victims ought to practice forgiveness? Under what circumstances do they actually practice forgiveness?
- » What type of person practices forgiveness? Does age matter? Sex? Religion? Culture? Region?
- » What effects does forgiveness have? On those who practice it? Perpetrators? Communities? Does it contribute to the building of peace?

These questions are designed not only to probe the extent and texture of forgiveness but also to assess objections to its practice. Currently, forgiveness plays only a small role in the practice of peace-building organizations and indeed it has been the subject of criticism on the part of both scholars and practitioners. The critics assert an array of interconnected charges: first, that forgiveness is only practiced by the “rare saint” and is too much – and perhaps even dangerous – to ask of the ordinary citizen. Second, forgiveness foregoes just prosecution and contributes to a culture of impunity. Third, forgiveness suppresses resentment, an allegedly more healthy and self-respecting response to wrongdoing. Fourth, forgiveness is a passive virtue and one that subjugates women. Fifth, forgiveness too often is foisted onto victims by political and religious leaders who thereby disrespect victims’ autonomy. Lastly, it is charged that forgiveness is grounded in religion and therefore disrespects secular citizens when it is advocated in the political

realm.

This study takes these objections seriously. Although concerns about forgiveness can be addressed fully only through moral reasoning, to an important extent they can be probed through the attitudes of citizens. Are support for and the practice of forgiveness indeed rare? Do victims feel unduly pressured to forgive? Do they feel that forgiveness circumvents justice? Do they insist that forgiveness be conditional upon other forms of justice? Do the attitudes of men and women towards forgiveness differ? How does religion influence their views? As we will see, the findings show that forgiveness can be practiced in a way that addresses some of these objections. Favor for forgiveness, for instance, does not negate support for a wider range of other measures that fulfill the rights and meet the needs of victims in the wake of armed conflict.

Methodology

Just as a photographer can capture a subject both through a wide view of a landscape and through a close-up perspective, so, too, this study seeks to understand forgiveness in Uganda through a broad analysis of the population as well as through individual stories and local dynamics. The study employed three methods of analysis: a survey of 640 Ugandans; ten focus groups of twelve people each; and 27 interviews with individual exemplars of forgiveness. These methods were deployed across five selected districts, each representing different sub-regions across Uganda that have experienced major armed violence: North-Central (Gulu), West Nile (Yumbe), Western (Kasese), Central (Luwero), and Eastern (Amuria). The project ran from August 2013 until April 2015. Field research took place between March and September 2014. Four preliminary visits, conducted in January 2012, August 2012, March 2013, and November 2013, explored and confirmed the plausibility of a study of forgiveness in Uganda.

The purpose of the survey was to assess both attitudes towards and the actual practice of forgiveness among a large number of Ugandans. Only then can judgments be made about whether forgiveness is widespread or rare and about how it is practiced and understood. Five teams of four

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researchers (20 surveyors altogether) conducted the survey in the above-mentioned five districts, each of them aiming to survey 120 respondents. In some cases, the teams exceeded this number, yielding a total of 640 respondents. Spreading the survey over five districts resulted in significant variation on rural and urban environment, religion, ethnicity, tribe, and time lapsed since the violence. Within the neighborhoods surveyed, respondents were randomly selected. The surveyors observed the principle of informed consent, eliciting each participant's signature on a form that explained the nature, purpose, and sponsorship of the survey; the potentially sensitive nature of the subject matter; and measures that were being taken to secure the data. The surveys were conducted with smart phones using Open Data Kit® software. They were recorded in English on the smart phone, though often translated on the spot by surveyors.

The survey utilized a range of questions regarding the questions listed above. (See the full survey instrument in the appendix.) It consisted of five parts, the first three of which measured attitudes towards forgiveness and the final two of which measured the practice of forgiveness among victims who had experienced violence or another serious violation of their human rights. The latter portion, assessing practice, began by asking victims what sort of human rights violation they had experienced. If they had not experienced any, then the survey would end for those respondents. The vast majority of respondents, though – about 595 – fell into the category of victims of human rights violations and so proceeded and completed the final two parts of the survey.

A workshop to train the 20 surveyors was held on July 10-11, 2014. The purpose of the survey, random selection techniques, selection bias, use of smart phones, language issues, informed consent, protocol, etiquette and logistics were covered and surveyors practiced administering the survey several times.

Results of the survey were analyzed through observation and interpretation of numerical results. For certain questions, cross tabulations were run to assess how people in different demographic categories answered the same question.

The focus groups, of which ten were conducted (two in each of the five districts), zoomed in on forgiveness more closely. Each group consisted of twelve people and lasted for an entire day. Because Ugandans are more likely to be open with people in their own age cohort, each pair of focus groups was separated into one consisting of people under 30 and one consisting of



Focus Group Discussion consisting of people under the age of thirty(30) years during the research in Gulu district

people over 30. Each focus group was organized and conducted by a team of six people, including a lead facilitator, an assistant facilitator, a videographer, a counselor, a rapporteur, and a driver. True to the methodology of a focus group, the conversation was facilitated through open-ended questions that sparked group discussion and interactive reflection. The broad questions posed over the course of the day included:

- » Is there peace in your region today?
- » What has been done in your region to address past episodes of violence? (For example, amnesty, reparations, trials of human rights violators, traditional rituals of reintegration).

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- » Is it good for a victim of violence to forgive the perpetrator of the violence?
- » If so, are there certain conditions under which this should take place? (For example, a prior apology or the exposure of the truth about violence to the victim.)
- » If forgiveness is good, then why? (Religion? Morality? Health? Peace in the community?)
- » If not, why it is not good?
- » Did many people in your region practice forgiveness towards perpetrators of violence?
- » Have you suffered from political violence, either directly (yourself) or indirectly (a friend or family member)?
- » Have you ever practiced forgiveness for an act of political violence? If not, might you do so in the future?
- » If so, what did forgiveness involve? (Words? Deeds? What kind?)
- » If so, what effect did forgiveness have on you? On your relationship with the perpetrator?
- » Should political leaders encourage their people to forgive? Religious leaders? Tribal leaders?

Numerous participants testified that the focus groups were healing and empowering, offering them a forum in which their suffering could be acknowledged and heard empathetically.

A workshop to train the focus group leaders was held on March 10-11, 2014. It covered composition of focus groups, conduct of focus groups, counseling needs, language issues, and logistics.

The exemplar interviews numbered 27. We conducted five interviews in each of the five districts, choosing interviewees from among the focus group participants. We also interviewed two exemplars “at large,” including

Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu and Angelina Atyam of Lira. For the exemplars, we chose people who had practiced forgiveness in illustrative or dramatic ways. In working at this up-close level, our purpose was different from but complementary to that of the survey. Rather than aim for a representative sample of the population, we aimed for people who could convey what forgiveness can look like.

The Landscape of Violence and Peace in Uganda – Choice of Study Sites

The study was conducted in five districts (Luwero, Gulu, Amuria, Yumbe and Kasese) across five regions that are diverse and distinctive yet have all experienced widespread violence and instability.

Luwero, located in Central Uganda lies at the heart of the famous “Luwero Triangle” a geographically sparse land — consisting of Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Luweero, Mityana, Mubende, Nakaseke, Nakasongola, and Wakiso districts — that was the site of the guerrilla fighting between the National Resistance Army (NRA) and the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), commonly known as the Bush War. Its peoples suffered countless atrocities at the hands of both sides of the conflict, leading to massive displacement and plunging the region into poverty from which it still suffers today. Other armed groups, such as the Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU) and the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM), likewise committed atrocities both before and after the Bush War.

Gulu is at the heart of the Acholi sub-region and northern Uganda. The over one million residents of the North-Central Acholi sub-region — consisting of the districts of Agago, Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Nwoya, and Pader — bore the brunt of the conflict with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). Over 90 percent of the entire Acholi population was displaced at some point during the fighting, with many spending over a decade in IDP camps. In the aftermath of the conflict, there has been significant secondary displacement caused by land disputes due in turn to acquisitions for national parks and reserves as well as for oil exploration. This displacement further fuels the historical neglect and violence experienced by the Acholi people on

the national level.

Yumbe is in the West Nile sub-region. This sub-region, made up of Arua, Adjumani, Koboko, Maracha, Moyo, Nebbi, Terego, Yumbe, and Zombo districts, has been afflicted by numerous insurgency movements after the fall of Idi Amin, namely the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) — both UNRF I and UNRF II — and the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF). Its over two million ethnically diverse inhabitants — consisting of the Alur, Jonam, Kakwa, Kuku, Lendu, Lugbara, Madi and Okebu peoples — also suffered from the spillover effects of neighboring conflicts in the northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan (and formerly southern Sudan), and northern Uganda, all of which resulted in large influxes of displaced persons.

Amuria is on the edge of the Teso sub-region in Eastern Uganda towards the Karamoja sub-region. The Eastern sub-region of Teso consists of Amuria, Bukedea, Kaberamaido, Katakwi, Kumi, Ngora, Pallisa, Serere, and Soroti districts. Named for the Iteso people, the region's population of over one million suffered from several conflicts, including one between Force Obote Back Again (FOBA) and the Ugandan Peoples Front/Army (UPF/A); one caused by LRA incursions; and several fought between ethnic groups — Karimojong, Bagisu, Babuya, Bhatikhana, and Shana — that continue through today, fuelled by land disputes and land grabs and further exacerbated by environmental instability and food insecurity.

Finally, Kasese is in the southwestern part of the country, bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Western Rwenzori sub-region, comprising Bundibugyo, Kabarole, Kamwenge, Kasese, Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo, and Ntoroko districts, has experienced instability and conflict since before Ugandan independence. Conflict between Bakonjo and Bamba militias (later forming the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU)) over claims regarding the recognition of the Rwenzururu Kingdom and the Toro Kingdom have led to mass killings of civilians on both sides. The Allied Democratic Front (ADF), formed from NALU members and established as an Islamist militia front, has carried out a violent anti-civilian insurgency campaign in the sub-region that continues today.

Responses

What would people be forgiving? Forms of Violence Experienced by Respondents

Part IV of the survey begins the practice portion of the instrument with a question that asks respondents to report whether they or a close friend or family member have experienced or witnessed an act of violence or other serious crime. It specifically asks respondents to answer “yes,” “no,” or “don’t know” to 22 different types of incidents and then offers an open-ended question in which they may report something different. Every type of incident elicited positive answers, the lowest receiving 86 yesses (equaling 14% of respondents) and the highest receiving 520 yesses (equaling 85% of respondents). Garnering the highest number of yesses were: “a family member has to flee his/her home because his/her life was threatened” (84.69%); “I felt my life was constantly under threat because of the political violence in my community” (84.01%); “my home or valuable property was damaged or destroyed” (83.88%); “I was forced to leave my home village” (82.71%); “a family member was the victim of violence” (80.23%); “a close friend had to flee his/her home because his/her life was threatened” (77.36%); “I saw someone being seriously injured or harmed” (70.36%); “a close friend was the victim of violence” (70.27%); “a member of my family was killed by violence” (68.63%); “I was the victim of violence” (63.27%); “a close friend was killed by violence” (61.44%); and “I was forced to live in a camp for displaced people” (61.8%). The open-ended question garnered a large and diverse number of responses, including “a man was buried alive”; “carrying very heavy load for a long distance”; “rape”; “torture;” “took . . . cattle, goats, sheep, and chicken”; “ear of brother cut”; “amputation”; “girl children were forced to marry early”; “I was forced to drop out of school”; “my uncle’s hands were cut off”; “rape and sodomy”; and “I was forced to kill other people.”

Respondents experienced violence at different dates, as Table 1 shows. The table reflects the fact that respondents may have experienced violence during more than one period.

Table 1

Period	Number of respondents answering yes to experiencing violence in this period	Percentage of 640 respondents answering yes
1970-1980	115	17.97%
1980-1990	340	53.13%
1990-2000	339	52.97%
2000-2008	271	42.34%
2009-present	121	18.91%

Violence was distributed amply across the regions, though the numbers were higher in some than in others, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2

Answer to “I was the victim of violence”	All	Central	Gulu	Kasese	Teso	West Nile
Yes	63.3%	46.3%	50.8%	54.3%	76%	90.6%
No	36.7%	53.7%	49.2%	45.7%	24%	9.4%
Observations	618	123	124	129	125	117

Not only did respondents report having experienced and witnessed violence and injury widely, but also they characterized Uganda as having a fragile peace. Useful for describing their views is the distinction between “negative peace,” characterized by an end to overt violence, and “positive peace,” in which tensions are reduced, large injustices are mitigated, and the absence of violence is sustainable. The focus group discussions make clear that Ugandans widely believe that negative peace is present but that positive peace is lacking.

Several themes emerged in participants’ explanations for why the peace was ‘fragile’. One was the prevalence of weaknesses in the political system, including the lack of free expression; the suppression of the media, including radio stations; a lack of true party competition; corruption; the weakness of democracy on a national level; and a lack of term limits for the

presidency.

A second common theme was the economic problems created and exacerbated by war, including a lack of economic development, persistent poverty, lack of development aid, lack of medical care, damage to hospitals, poor roads, unemployment, understaffing and high dropout levels in schools, and a lack of social services.

Thirdly, the focus group participants pointed to persistent sources of tensions, including land disputes, unsettled property claims, impunity for theft and cattle rustling, gender-based violence, tensions between pastoralists and crop-growing farmers, landmines, ethnic and regional tensions, tribalism, and violent legacies of colonialism.

A fourth theme was personal wounds that arose from war, including trauma, increased suicide rates, alcoholism and drug addictions, the spread of HIV/AIDS, amputations, and unaddressed medical needs.

Fifth, participants brought up breakdowns in the family system, orphans, child-headed families, and missing relatives. Finally, many complained about the lack of transitional justice measures, a theme that is further elaborated below. It is in the milieu marked by all of these ills that the question of forgiveness arises.

How Widely do Ugandans Forgive?

To what extent do Ugandans embrace forgiveness in attitude and in practice? Several survey questions assessed this central question of the study. One question measured attitudes towards forgiveness by asking, “what would you like to see happen to members of rebel groups who committed human rights violations?” Respondents were asked to respond “yes” or “no” to a variety of possibilities, among which were “capture and kill them”; “have them compensate the victim”; “have them confess”; “grant them amnesty”; and “forgive them.” A strong majority of 60.94% said “yes” to the forgiveness choice, whereas 39.06 % said no. When asked the same question regarding members of the Ugandan military, 53.91% said “yes” to the forgiveness choice, while 46.09% said no. Another question asked for responses to the statement, “it is good for victims to practice forgiveness in the aftermath of

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violence.” Here, 85.97% of respondents answered “agree,” whereas 8.71% answered “disagree” and 5.32% answered “not sure.”

Another question assessed the extent of the practice of forgiveness by asking for responses to the statement, “people in my region have practiced forgiveness widely in the aftermath of armed conflict.” To this question, 47.83% of the respondents answered “agree,” whereas 32.31% answered “disagree” and 19.97% answered “not sure.” All of the foregoing questions were asked of Ugandans at large, not just victims.

Another question, posed only to victims of violence (593 respondents), measured the practice of forgiveness. It asked directly, “did you personally forgive the perpetrator of the act of violence against you?” To this question, 68.3% answered “yes”; 28.16% answered “no”; and 3.54% answered “don’t know.”

Do these numbers represent high or low favor for forgiveness? It depends on one’s prior expectations. Given the extent of the violence in the regions studied and given the seriousness of wounds that victims suffered, the numbers are arguably strikingly high. They are also strikingly high if one believes that forgiveness is a rare practice in the aftermath of armed conflict. Perhaps most surprising is that 68.3% of victims report personally forgiving the perpetrator of violence against them. Favor for forgiveness, however, is far from unanimous. Numbers like 60.94% and 53.91%, both representing “yes” to the forgiveness choice, leave substantial portions of the population unfavorable towards forgiveness. The focus groups and interviews corroborated the survey: the approval and the practice of forgiveness was widespread but far from unanimous. What can be said with confidence is that forgiveness is not confined to the “rare saint” but rather is approved and practiced commonly among Ugandans in the wake of war.

Although this study argues that forgiveness in Uganda is not the preserve of the “rare saint,” there are nevertheless certain people who stand as “exemplars” of forgiveness, illustrating its practice in extraordinary ways. One of these exemplars is a woman named Angelina Atyam, whose daughter was abducted, along with some 130 other girls, from her Catholic boarding

school in October 1996 by the Lord's Resistance Army, led by Joseph Kony. It was a famous abduction, reported in the New York Times and widely known in Uganda.

Distressed, helpless, and angry, Angelina and other parents of the abducted girls met regularly at the local Catholic Cathedral "to work together, to pray together, to advocate together". Prayer did not come easily, though, and was hindered by their anger. Finally, one day when Angelina and other parents came to the phrase "as we forgive those . . ." in the Lord's Prayer, they came to the realization that God was calling them to forgive the abductors of their daughters. Angelina followed the call that she had heard. She even found the mother of the soldier who held her daughter in captivity and through her, forgave him, his family, and his clan. Later, when this soldier was killed in the conflict, she wept and offered her condolences. She came to speak regularly to other parents of abducted children and urged forgiveness.

Angelina's activities were not confined to forgiveness. She and other parents formed the Concerned Parents Association, which advocated for the girls' release and began to bring international attention to their abduction. Kony himself became worried about the international publicity and had one of his minions approach Angelina and offer to release her daughter if the parents would cease the international advocacy. Angelina refused, saying that she would only cease the publicity if the LRA released all of the girls. Eventually Angelina's daughter was released, after spending seven and a half years in captivity.

What Does It Mean to Forgive?

What does it mean to forgive, according to Ugandans? Common themes emerged in the focus group discussions and interviews. For instance, participants generally understood forgiveness to be a matter of the heart. It is a willed, inner decision, and not a mere outward transaction. As one Luwero interviewee said, "forgiveness comes from the heart. If you don't [forgive], your heart is always full with anger and instead of thinking about development, you are thinking about revenge." Even an interviewee from Kasese who could not forgive agreed that forgiveness is a matter of the heart:

“I cannot say that I have forgiven, because there are some events that when they come to mind, I think the [people involved in them] are bad people. But when I’m trying to cope with daily life, I find that . . . in my heart . . . I have not truly forgiven.” Those who did forgive or favor forgiveness often spoke of empathy with the perpetrator. An interviewee from Amuri, for instance, said that “[m]ost of the (perpetrators) have been dying and the thought of them going through a painful death after all they had put us through, made me know that I had to forgive and forgave them.”

When victims change their hearts through forgiveness, they pursue two major kinds of ends. First, they make an active decision to relinquish revenge, resentment, grudges, and paybacks. As one Gulu focus group participant said, “forgiveness is letting go the wrong things someone has done to you by trying to forget about it. It is [to leave] bad things and start doing good things.” Similar comments emerged across the five focus groups. “Forgiveness is not holding a grudge for the wrongdoer but doing away with revenge,” said another Gulu participant. Similarly, focus group participants in Luwero said that forgiveness is “when you let go of something after being hurt” and is “not to do revenge to the perpetrator,” while a participant in Amuria said that it is “to release that person who hurt you, beat you, and stole your property.”

Voiced commonly across all of the focus groups and interviews, though, was also the view that forgiveness involves not merely a relinquishment but also a second kind of goal that victims seek -- one towards constructing a better relationship with the perpetrator. What exactly this relationship entails varied among the participants. Forgiveness always involved, at minimum, the victim deciding to judge the perpetrator in a new way – as no longer holding him guilty, no longer counting the deed against him. In many cases, though, forgiveness involved much more. Sometimes, the degree of restoration was surprising. One interviewee in Amuria even reported, “I wished the people who did all that to me the very best of luck and some of them died” and went on to say, “the perpetrators are now very good friends of mine; we chat and talk about projects. I forgave them.” From an Amuria focus group also came the comment: “What I have learnt is that when you forgive that person who

wronged you, he or she becomes your friend.” One focus group participant from Gulu stated directly, “you forgive in order to have a good relationship,” while an interviewee in Kasese said, “when you forgive someone that means that you are going to create friendship and you will work and collaborate with him in any aspect of life.” An amputee in Kasese likewise reported having forgiven the perpetrator in the context of ritual ceremonies and claims that “they remain friends to this day.”

In many cases, by contrast, such levels of restoration did not take place. Some victims exercised forgiveness in the sense of not counting their perpetrator’ deeds against them but did not desire to restore full friendship. In numerous other cases, perpetrators were not present to be forgiven. A few victims wished to forgive the leader of the army that injured them, this being either Joseph Kony of the Lord’s Resistance Army or President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni. In the words of one interviewee from Amuria, “I forgave but . . . for it to be complete I want to forgive Museveni while holding his hand while we as the survivors are face-to-face with him, holding and shaking hands and explaining why we have forgiven each other. My forgiveness to Museveni is not complete unless we sit together, talk openly and forgive each other because there we would have understood each other . . .”

Far more commonly, victims did not know the identity or the whereabouts of perpetrators or else perpetrators were dead. Victims who forgave in these cases did so “in the heart,” to use the expression of a Luwero interviewee, meaning that these victims made a willed decision to forgive but did not or could not express it to the perpetrator in words. The survey poses to those victims who practiced forgiveness the question, “did you express forgiveness to the perpetrator in words?” A total of 27.9% answered “yes,” while 70.92% answered “no” (and 1.18% don’t know). Several people described what forgiveness from the heart meant to them. One interviewee in Amuria said, “when we speak of forgiveness I have forgiven them because they don’t know me and neither do I know them and God said that we should forgive wrongdoers.” A focus group participant in Gulu explained, “I haven’t gained anything out of what happened to me so far. That is why I chose to

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forgive them and they are now my brothers. Even if the time comes and they ask for forgiveness, I will tell them that I forgave them a long time ago. I have a forgiving heart.”

From the focus groups and interviews there also emerged common views of what forgiveness is not. Numerous participants pointed out that forgiveness is not forgetting. “It’s easy to forgive a person but you cannot forget,” said one focus group participant in Amuria. Forgiveness is not easy, many also stressed. “Forgiveness is like swallowing a bitter pill,” said one participant in Gulu. One focus group participant from Amuria spoke of the difficulty of forgiveness but also held that the focus group experience helped make forgiveness more possible: “I have learned that forgiveness is a hard thing to do. Some of us in the morning were saying that we were not ready to forgive but right now people have room in their hearts for forgiveness. I realize that forgiveness is a gradual thing that requires time and patience. Forgiveness results in peace, which results in a common understanding.” Another focus group participant from Amuria said, “I have learned from this discussion that I should forgive.”

Many stressed that forgiveness “takes time and a lot of courage,” as a Gulu focus group participant put it. “Forgiveness is not easy,” echoed another, adding that “one can’t wake up and decide to forgive one day; it comes from deep within a person’s heart.” Another spoke similarly, saying, “years down the line they forgive and reconcile. Even those who harbor grudges in their deathbed call perpetrators and forgive them. It therefore takes time to forgive.” A Luwero focus group participant also commented on the time factor, observing that “if you’re hurt less you forgive quickly but if you are hurt severely it takes you long to forgive.” Some victims found it too difficult to forgive at all. One Luwero focus group participant stated, “I have never forgiven; I cannot forgive. To forgive someone who killed my father or mother!

Conditionality

It is often said forgiveness should not stand alone among measures that address the wounds of violent conflict. Asking victims to forgive in

the absence of other remedies might well seem to shoulder them – they who have suffered most – with the burden of building peace. One focus group participant in Yumbe expressed this objection as follows: “It seems forgiveness is being pushed on us unconditionally. We have conditions for forgiveness.”

Frequently, in the focus groups and interviews, forgiveness was linked to other measures that constitute justice. The examples that follow are supported by the voices of many. One interviewee in Amuria called for prior repentance: “How can one forgive someone he or she is not seeking nor asking for forgiveness? All we do is just pray that God grants them a repenting spirit and that even those in the bush may come out.” Likewise from an interview in Luwero came an appeal for perpetrators to acknowledge their wrongs: “The one reason why people are not forgiving is because people have not come out to say, ‘I’m sorry,’ or to say, ‘Well, I acknowledge that I did this and that.’ By this, people will be willing to say that since you have acknowledged the wrongs you are forgiven.” A Gulu focus group participant quipped more directly; “apology is required.” Speaking of Joseph Kony, an interviewee from Amuria appealed for accountability: “When [the ICC captures] Kony they will hold him accountable and this alone would make me forgive Kony.” From an Amuria focus group came an appeal that also proved common in the focus groups, one for compensation: “I . . . was caned 300 strokes and buried with dead people so now how can I forgive and forget when they have not come to me to ask for forgiveness? Let them come and we sit on a round table, that’s when I will forgive them. The owner of his dog can treat his dog [well] but they just leave us like that with nothing, without treatment, no compensation.” Another voice from an Amuria focus group called for development aid: “Forgiveness is something good but the government should come and help us in acquiring skills for example tailoring courses, saloons, etc.” A Luwero interviewee queried, “when will the president come to see them, share the loss of our people that were murdered and appreciate us for taking part in the liberation war?” Still another called for the prior telling of truth about the deeds committed in the conflict: “Truth telling with actions of reconciliation leads to true forgiveness.” One interviewee in

Kasese thought that forgiveness could happen through a conference in which both sides participated.

A set of questions early in the interview asked victims what sort of justice perpetrators ought to face. One question, “is it important to you that persons responsible for abuses in Uganda are tried through the judicial system for their actions?” garnered 83.07% “yes,” 9.74% “no,” and 7.19% “don’t know.”

The next question followed up, “who should be tried?” presenting respondents with a range of choices, to each of which they could answer “yes” or “no.” Receiving the most yesses at 75.94% were leaders of rebel groups, with leaders of governments receiving 67.34%, leaders of the army 57.19%, and members of rebel groups 49.38%. Far fewer respondents wanted to see ordinary soldiers in the army tried (37.03%) or the police tried (38.13%).

The question mentioned above, “what would you like to see happen to members of rebel groups who committed human rights violations?” sought to assess what sort of measures Ugandans would apply to perpetrators. Among the responses, 64.53% said “yes” to “have them confess”; 54.22% said “yes” to “put them on trial and then in prison”; 47.66% said “yes” to “reintegrate them into the community”; 45.16% said “yes” to “reconcile with them”; 38.44% said “yes” to “grant them amnesty”; and 30.31% said “yes” to “have them compensate the victim.”

A similar question asked, “what would you like to see happen to members of the Ugandan military who committed human rights violations?” Here, 66.56% answered “yes” to “put them on trial and then in prison”; 58.91% said “yes” to “have them confess”; 41.09% said “yes” to “reconcile with them”; 38.91% said “yes” to “have them compensate the victim”; 38.75% said “yes” to “reintegrate them into the community”; 30.31% said “yes” to “grant them amnesty.” Generally, respondents wished to focus most on justice for top leaders and offered robust support for trials and confessions.

Yet, if victims held that justice ought to be done in these respects, they were equally clear that justice had not been done in these respects. Two sets of survey questions captured this view. Table 3 deals with the attitudes of Ugandans at large.

Table 3

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Not Sure
Perpetrators of violence in my region have been held accountable for their crimes	68.11%	13.30%	18.59%
Victims of violence in my region have been adequately compensated for their suffering	83.76%	5.63%	10.61%
Leaders of organized armed groups that were involved in violence in my region have adequately apologized for wrongs they committed.	77.9%	11.13%	10.97%

Table 4 is a set of questions posed to victims of violence.

Table 4

Statement	No	Yes	Don't Know
Have you (or your family member, or close friend) received fair payment from the government for your suffering?	94.15%	3.68%	2.17%
Has the person who committed the violence been punished enough?	74.5%	4.03%	21.48%
Are you satisfied with the opportunities you have been given to tell other people the story about this violence?	61.91%	30.37%	7.72%
Has the person(s) who committed the violence apologized to your satisfaction?	85.74%	8.72%	5.54%
Has society recognized the violence to your satisfaction?	29.92%	54.12%	15.97%
Has enough been done to find out the truth about what happened?	76.35%	11.99%	11.66%
Has the person who committed this violence been punished enough?	75.51%	3.21%	21.28%
Has the person who committed the violence expressed remorse to your satisfaction?	83.95%	6.76%	9.29%

These two tables show that on virtually every dimension of justice, with the possible exception of satisfactory societal recognition of the violence, strong majorities of victims believe that justice has not been done.

Another battery of questions was posed to victims of violence who had interaction with their perpetrator subsequent to the act of violence.

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This was a fairly small subset of victims; only 14.41% of victims claimed to have had such interaction. Those who did answered the following about conditions of justice.

Table 5

Statement	No	Yes	Don't know
Has the person confessed to what he/she did?	43.43%	46.46%	10.10%
Has the person apologized for what he/she did?	49.49%	41.41%	9.09%
Has the person demonstrated that he/she feels bad about what he/she did?	34.65%	48.51%	16.83%
Has the person offered some form of compensation for what he/she did?	87.13%	4.95%	7.92%
Has the person requested you forgive him/her for what he/she did?	47.52%	45.54%	6.93%
Has the leader of the perpetrator's organization apologized for what was done to you?	59.41%	20.79%	19.8%

To be sure, several of these questions show a fairly even balance between those who felt that conditions of justice were fulfilled and those who did not. Only the question about whether or not the perpetrator has demonstrated feeling remorse-shows more answering yes than no. Generally, the results are quite mixed. It cannot be said that majorities of victims feel that perpetrators made satisfactory amends. It is important to remember that only a small percentage of victims claimed to have interacted with their perpetrator.

To a striking degree victims were willing to support and practice forgiveness despite their deep dissatisfaction with justice. This finding is partially supported through victims' support for amnesty for perpetrators, conveyed in Table 6.

Table 6

Statement	No	Yes	D o n ' t Know
I approve of the Amnesty Act of 2000, which offered amnesty to members of the Lord's Resistance Army	12.78%	71.38%	15.84%
Do you consider this grant an act of forgiveness on the part of the government?	7.98%	58.28%	33.74%
Do you believe that he/she should have been granted amnesty?	23.10%	58.52%	18.38%

Amnesty is not necessarily the same thing as forgiveness. It is a grant of legal pardon on the part of the government and does not necessarily involve a change in heart or outlook on the part of victims. Yet, the Amnesty Act of 2000, passed by the Ugandan Parliament, was viewed by Ugandans as an act of forgiveness. "The government should continue with the act of forgiveness through the various ways such as the Amnesty Act," said one interviewee in Yumbe. Even when victims did not strictly regard the act as forgiveness, their support for it demonstrates a broad attitude of forbearance on their part.

In questions posed to Ugandans in general about their attitudes towards forgiveness, a majority of respondents supported forgiveness even without compensation or punishment, but a majority also wanted to see apology and the telling of truth before forgiveness. To the question, "when should a victim forgive a perpetrator for a violation of the victim's human rights in the context of armed violence?" respondents could choose among five exclusive answers. The most popular response, garnering 43.06%, was "only upon the perpetrator's apology." The response, "only upon material reparations or compensation from the perpetrator," received 16.94%, while the response, "only after the victim has healed," received 10.48% of responses. A total of 70.48% of respondents, then, favored some condition for forgiveness. Significantly, though, 26.45% answered "always," indicating a willingness to forgive without condition, while only 3.06% answered "never," indicating an unwillingness to forgive at all.

A separate series of questions, presented in Tables 7 and 8, also assessed conditionality.

Table 7

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Not sure
Victims should practice forgiveness only after their perpetrators have apologized.	39.48%	56.47%	4.05%
Victims should practice forgiveness only after they have been compensated.	61.20%	35.06%	3.73%
Victims should practice forgiveness only after their perpetrators have been punished	54.8%	40.33%	4.88%
Victims should practice forgiveness only when the truth has been told about the violence they have suffered.	38.11%	54.89%	7%

In still other questions that were posed to victims who had practiced forgiveness, levels of conditionality upon apology and reparations were quite low.

Table 8

Statement	No	Yes	Don't Know
Did the perpetrator apologize before you forgave?	85.88%	10.12%	4%
Did the perpetrator offer any reparations or perform any act of repair before you forgave?	95.75%	0.94%	3.3%

Among the small number of victims who received an apology, 65.33% said that their act of forgiveness was not conditional upon this apology, while 18.67% said that it was conditional, with 16% answering “don’t know.”

Just as the focus groups and interviews yielded demands for justice to be fulfilled, so too, they revealed victims willing to forgive unilaterally, that is, in the absence of prior apology or other measure of justice. “I can forgive freely without conditions because if you attach conditions you might be denied when your time comes,” declared a focus group participant in Yumbe. “They have never apologized to us but we found it fit to forgive them,” an interviewee in Luwero averred. One focus group participant

defined forgiveness as “living and work together with the perpetrator, even if the person has not said sorry.” Forgiveness is, “doing good to the person who has wronged you,” said another. In a few cases, victims even claimed that forgiveness could induce repentance in perpetrators. One interviewee in Luwero, for instance, held that, “perpetrators always feel guilty each time they meet their victims but if you extend gestures of love to them, they are left with no choice but to soften their hearts and allow these gestures. After consistent good practice, the gap is bridged. A mere . . . hullo to a perpetrator means a lot in bridging the gap.” Likewise, an interviewee in Gulu, who had suffered severe violence during the war in the north, offered that, “if the victim initiates the forgiveness process, the perpetrator is weakened and humbled and more prepared to accept forgiveness.”

Why Do Ugandans Forgive?

What motivates Ugandans to forgive? Six broad factors emerge from the survey, the focus groups, and the interviews. The strongest of these is religion. Of those surveyed, 37.48% identified as Roman Catholic; 26% as Anglican; and 22.71% as Muslim. The district of Yumbe is largely Muslim. Rates of attendance at religious services provide a proxy of religious practice, with 47.12% of survey respondents attending once a week and 30.51% attending two or more times a week, a total of about 78% attending services once or more every week. To the question, “which of the following statements best describes your practice of prayer or religious meditation?,” 80.96% answered “prayer is a regular part of my life” – the strongest of the available answers -- with only 10.88% answering “I usually pray during times of stress or need but rarely at any other time.”

Religiosity translates directly into forgiveness. One survey question directed at respondents who had practiced forgiveness asked, “Did you forgive because of your religious beliefs?” An overwhelming 82.31% of respondents answered “yes,” while only 15.8% answered “no.” This was not the only question that plumbed motivation; a respondent could answer affirmatively this question as well as other questions pertaining to tribal traditions, hope for psychological relief, and other factors. Religion, though, was the factor

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that garnered the most yesses. In answer to the question, “Which of the following is a good reason to forgive?,” 62.34% answered “yes” to “because forgiveness is the teaching of Christianity,” while 19.84% answered “yes” to “because forgiveness is the teaching of Islam.” These percentages correspond closely to the percentage of the population belonging to these religions.



Christians celebrating the way of the cross on a Good Friday which symbolizes the suffering of Jesus Christ in atonement of human sins in Arua district during the research

Christianity and Islam both contain strong teachings of forgiveness. In the New Testament, Jesus exhorts his followers to forgive numerous times. For instance, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs his disciples to pray, “forgive us our trespasses and we forgive those who trespass against us,” and then links their forgiveness of others to their being forgiven by God when he says, “for if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Forgiveness is also

enjoined in the Quran, which contains 128 instances of the word forgive (or forgiveness or forgiving), sometimes describing the character of God, sometimes exhorting humans to forgive. As a generalization, though one that admits of exceptions, interpreters of Christianity are more favorable to unilateral forgiveness (without prior condition), while interpreters of Islam are more likely to counsel forgiveness only in the wake of apology.

One of the reasons that Ugandans associate religion and forgiveness is that their religious leaders encourage forgiveness. As one focus group participant in Gulu said, “religious leaders play a big role in providing a platform for preaching forgiveness.” For example, the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, a prominent coalition of Catholic, Anglican, and Muslim leaders in Northern Uganda, made forgiveness and reconciliation the core theme of its message of peace in the 1990s and 2000s. Religious leaders in other parts of Uganda have articulated the same theme. One of the interviewees in Luwero, for instance, was Bishop Paul Semugerere, who advocated forgiveness for building peace in the region. Further down the hierarchy, Christian pastors and Muslim imams preach forgiveness throughout Uganda. Survey responses show that Ugandans both approve of and follow the teachings of religious leaders. A question in the attitudes portion of the survey presents the statement, “religious leaders should encourage their followers to practice forgiveness,” with which 97.09% of respondents agreed. Respondents

Standing out among religious leaders who have advocated publicly for forgiveness is the Catholic Archbishop of Gulu, John Baptist Odama. Odama played a central role in organizing the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), a denominational group of religious leaders who came together in the late 1990s to advocate for an end to the war in northern Uganda between the Government of Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army, led by Joseph Kony. Along with Odama, who was Chairman of the ARLPI from 2002 to 2010, the group included Anglican bishops as well as a Muslim Sheikh.

The ARLPI was a leading force behind the Amnesty Act of 2000, passed by the Ugandan parliament, a cornerstone of the peace process that enabled thousands of child soldiers to leave the LRA and return home. ARLPI leaders,

including Odama, ventured through the bush on several occasions to meet with Kony, thus paving the way for peace negotiations. Towards their people, the ARLPI leaders were tireless advocates of forgiveness and reconciliation. “Forgiveness always has the result of uniting the one who has injured, who forgives, with the one who is the perpetrator. It brings harmony,” Odama explained to the researchers. “Forgiveness is a must for us if we want to heal our society,” he went on.

To ease the return of child soldiers and displaced peoples, the ARLPI leaders advocated the use of rituals found in the tradition of the Acholis that combined forgiveness, truth telling, reparations, apologies, and a community meal that would mark the end of hostilities and the restoration of the community. Of course, they also appealed to the teachings of their faith.

Odama’s leadership is illustrated vividly in the story of the night commuters. During the war, children would avoid abduction, which usually happened during the night, by walking every evening from their village to the city of Gulu, where the rebels would not approach and they would be safe. The next morning, they would walk back to their village for school. For several years, thousands of children practiced this routine, sleeping overnight in the “bus park,” a large, open-air dirt parking lot. In order to show solidarity with the children, Odama and other religious leaders spent the night with them in the bus park. For three nights in a row, Odama, decked out in his white robes and skull cap, traipsed with his bedroll down the orange dusty road from his residence to the bus park to sleep next to the children. When it rained, the bishops carried the children under a shelter.

The media showed up to cover the event, which helped bring the attention of the international community and the government of Uganda to the children’s plight – one of the purposes of the bishops’ visit. But that was not all. When Odama spoke to the children, he apologized to them and begged their forgiveness for not having done enough for them. It was not clear what more he could have done, but he was renouncing any image of being the heroic rescuer and instead came in humility.

In the interview, Odama was asked how he could go meet with Kony, who was responsible for so many atrocities. Odama said that he looked into



The Most Rev. John Baptist Odama shares his experience on forgiveness in Uganda during the research

Kony's soul and saw a human being there. What Kony needs is repentance and salvation, not the punishment of the International Criminal Court, Odama said. "Repentance is the sense of humiliating oneself to accept that here I've done badly," Odama said. Odama and his fellow religious leaders are highly skeptical of the International Criminal Court, which they view as an institution that western powers imposed from the outside and that has actually impeded a peace agreement.

who had practiced forgiveness were asked, "did a religious leader encourage you to forgive?" to which 69.95% answered "yes" and 28.37% answered "no." This prompts the question of whether people felt pressured to forgive by religious leaders, one of the frequent charges that skeptics raise against forgiveness. In answer to the question, "did a religious leader put pressure on you to forgive?", an overwhelming 93.72% of those who practiced forgiveness answered "no," while only 5.56% answered "yes."

In the focus groups and interviews, appeals to religious faith as the reason for forgiveness were extremely common. "As a Christian or Muslim, if you do not have that heart of forgiveness, you are cheating yourself by saying that you are a Christian," said one interviewee in Amuria. A focus group participant in Gulu stated, quite plainly, "forgiveness is God's heart and way. When you wrong someone, or vice versa, you need to forgive if you believe in Christ."

Several people pointed to the teachings of their church. "The church provides a platform for preaching the gospel of forgiveness and the message goes wide," said one focus group participant from Gulu while another said, "I joined the church and God gave me the command to forgive and pray that God should give them the heart to forgive others." One interviewee from Gulu accorded the church a particularly strong role in helping her forgive: "The church is my inspiration because whenever they preach something touches me; I feel the need to release someone."

Many also appealed to the Bible or the Quran. "The Bible is what motivates me to forgive," said one focus group participant from Amuria. "Even in the Bible when one is in the wrong they have to be forgiven and you

become brother and sister and the wrongdoer will realize that he had taken a wrong path,” said an interviewee in Yumbe. Several people appealed to the Bible’s injunction to forgive seventy times seven times. Similarly, a Muslim in Yumbe averred, “according to the Quran, before Allah if you forgive, you will be rewarded.”

Many combined their religious justifications with an invocation of the benefits forgiveness brings. Some mentioned the alleviation of anger. “Bitterness and hatred is like cancer in our bodies because when you keep them for long you may end up destroyed. Therefore it is very important to forgive; as a Christian, the love of God constrains us to forgive,” observed one Gulu focus group participant. One Gulu interviewee said, “after reading the bible for a long time . . . I found some verses that if you forgive you will also be forgiven and the anger cooled down and now I have forgiven him.” Another interviewee in Gulu thought that forgiveness rooted in faith could foster a broader social peace: “We should try and forgive our wrongdoers and work on developing our region and forgiveness should be true from the

One of the exemplar interviews was with a woman from Gulu who was arrested and severely beaten by government soldiers. She attests that the soldiers beat her because her uncle advocated voting for a rival candidate to President Yoweri Museveni, leading the government to conclude that she was in collusion with the rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army. Taking her to a local hotel, the soldiers struck her over 80 times with canes, hurting her so severely that she vomited blood. Two soldiers then returned her home on a bicycle and left her there to nurse her wounds. For three months she could not walk or work and could only afford to eat three meals per week. Without her husband, who had been killed in the war serving as a government soldier, her children were left to care for her and to support the family as best they could through menial jobs.

Not long after, two army commanders asked her to give over one of her daughters to be the wife of one of them, in return for which they would report the soldiers who beat her to the government. She refused, saying that her children were all that she had in the aftermath of her husband’s death and that they were her hope and courage. The soldiers allowed her daughter

to stay with her.

“Concerning fear and bitterness,” she described, “I had no space for bitterness but all I could think about was forgiveness.” She continued, “my attitude and actions were positive towards those who had killed my uncle, mom, and those who had made me suffer. It was a little tricky because my son was determined to take revenge on all that we had gone through but I sat him down and told him that vengeance is not an option for solving problems and told him that I had forgiven it all from deep within my heart because that is what the Lord expects of us.”

She strongly stresses her religious motives. “I am a religious person. I have embraced Christ and I stick to Him because His word is true and whatever is written in the Bible is the real word of God.” This leads her to forgive. “I have forgiven them though they call me mad when they see me praying. I forgave because there is no need to have a bitter heart because I will be the one to suffer. God doesn’t want us to live in un-forgiveness; we should forgive.” She explains the benefits of forgiveness: “Forgiveness has helped me live amicably in the community. I can live in love, transparency and no fear of the past and it has helped me forget what happened.”

heart. Who are we not to forgive if Jesus Christ was nailed on the cross but he chose to forgive? . . . The government should also forgive and people should understand that forgiving doesn’t mean that you are defeated; it simply means that you are courageous enough to let go.” Several people linked their willingness to forgive with their recognition of themselves as a fellow sinner. “The reflection of me as being a sinner is what motivates me to forgive,” shared one focus group participant.

In not every case, though, did religious faith help people to forgive. Sometimes suffering and injustice led to skepticism about God. One focus group participant in Amuria said, “forgiveness should not occur because I lost brothers and some were abducted. Land has been grabbed by the rich and literate people from the illiterates. People are dying. God says we should forgive but I have not seen God.” These voices were far fewer than those whose faith led them to forgive, but they merit mention.

A second broad factor that led Ugandans to forgive was their

cultural traditions. Many claimed that forgiveness was firmly embedded in their cultural traditions. In the attitudes portion of the survey, 83.82% of respondents agreed with the statement, “it is good for members of tribes to practice forgiveness within tribal rituals of reconciliation,” while merely 9.39% disagreed. In the practice portion of the survey, among survey respondents who said they had forgiven their perpetrators, those who cited their tribal traditions were not nearly as numerous as those who cited their religious faith, but still the numbers are significant. In answer to the question, “did you forgive because of your tribal traditions?,” 45.24% said “yes,” while 52.14% said “no.” Ugandans resoundingly endorsed the authority of tribal leaders to encourage forgiveness, with 92.23% agreeing to the statement, “tribal leaders should encourage their members to practice forgiveness.”

Many voices in the study alluded to specific tribal rituals that enact forgiveness and reconciliation between perpetrators of wrongs and their victims. One interviewee in Amuria explained, “in African cultures, forgiveness was a system used to manage affairs; it is implanted in the blood of the African people. That is why we can forgive the people of Karamoja after they have taken our cattle and been with us at war and killed our children. But today we sit with them, for the purpose of a peaceful coexistence.” For instance, the Acholi of Northern Uganda are well known for their mato oput rituals, which restore relationships in a community through a combination of truth-telling, reparations, apology, forgiveness, and a meal that brings together the entire community. The survey shows that only a minority of Ugandans who practiced forgiveness did so in the context of a ritual like mato oput. To the question, “did you forgive within the context of a tribal ritual?,” only 20.14% answered “yes,” while 77.94% answered “no.” In the focus groups and interviews, however, numerous references to forgiveness in the context of traditional ceremonies arose.

It appears that most of these ceremonies, often involving the slaughter of an animal and a ceremonial meal, were far simpler than the mato oput rituals of the Acholi, which are demanding in time and money. One focus group participant in Luwero explains, “there are two ways for the forgiveness of crimes committed during the war. For example, you organize

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an event, cook food and call the other person and you each state what is on your mind; and the other is confession from the mouth of the person that committed the wrong. This involves truth-telling.” The importance of cultural ceremonies emerged in an interview in Yumbe: “We have actually forgiven each other but we need that symbolic gesture of culturally talking about truth telling and then eating together, pushing our fingers into the same saucepan . . . that will symbolize the whole forgiveness.” A focus group participant in Gulu echoed, “therefore no shedding of blood can take place because the blood of the two goats has been used as atonement. The ceremony is known as ‘omusakano,’ which means friendship.” Another focus group participant in Gulu explained cultural ceremony through a story: “William shot Kijesi in the leg. Kijesi got amputated and his family vowed revenge on William’s family. The elders patched up a reconciliation and William was brought to apologize to Kijesi. A goat was slaughtered, the boys put their feet in the blood and drunk from the same gourd, and they remained friends to this day.”

A third factor that motivated Ugandans to forgive was their family tradition. Many references arose in the focus groups and the interviews to parents or to long family traditions that espoused forgiveness. To the survey question, “did friends or family encourage you to forgive?”, 52.29% of respondents answered “yes,” while 46.99% answered “no.” Similar to their experiences with religious leaders, respondents reported feeling encouraged to forgive by their families, rather than pressured to do so. To the question, “did friends or family put pressure on you to forgive?”, 92.31% answered “no” while 6.49% answered “yes.” As one interviewee in Gulu put it, “what motivates one to forgive is the family upbringing. If you are brought up in a family that teaches one how to honor and respect others, you are likely to forgive.” An interviewee from Luwero elaborates at greater length on family influence: “My father from home taught me how to forgive. He used to say to me that if someone annoys you, always forgive him/her to have peace in you.”

The influence of family, tribe and religion on forgiveness can be contrasted with the weak influence of political leaders. To the question, “did a political leader or government official encourage you to forgive?”, 68.37%

answered “no” while 28.95% answered “yes.” Respondents also offered an overwhelming “no” of 95.62% to the question, “did a political leader or government official put pressure on you to forgive?” Political beliefs matter little, too. To the question, “did you forgive because of your political beliefs?” 21.85% answered “yes,” while 76.01% answered “no.”

A fourth factor that motivated forgiveness was the desire for psychological peace. In the attitudes section of the survey, respondents were asked, “which of the following is a good reason to forgive?” A strong majority of 67.5% answered “yes” to the response, “because forgiveness allows a victim to be healed from anger,” while 32.5% answered “no.” Displaying the empathy that forgiveness can involve, 47.03% answered “yes” to the response, “because forgiveness brings psychological relief to the perpetrator,” while 52.97% answered “no.” While the yesses were in a minority, given that empathy with a perpetrator involves a difficult extension of concern, the number is arguably high. Among respondents who had practiced forgiveness, in answer to the question, “did you forgive because you thought that forgiveness would make you less anxious?,” a high 76.96% said “yes,” while 19.48% answered “no” and 3.56% answered “don’t know.” Similarly, to the question, “did you forgive because you thought that forgiveness would make you less angry?,” a very high 82.19% answered “yes,” while only 14.96% answered “no,” and 2.85% answered “don’t know.” Respondents who had practiced forgiveness were also asked to reflect on the effects of forgiveness through the question, “did you feel greater peace or less anxiety or stress after you forgave?,” to which a preponderant 91.87% answered “yes,” while 6.22% answered “no” and 1.91% answered “don’t know.”

In the focus groups and interviews, testimonies to the healing effects of forgiveness were frequent. One interviewee from Gulu claimed, “forgiveness has helped me live amicably in the community. I can live in love, transparency and no fear of the past and it has helped me forget what has happened.” Participants in a Gulu focus group observed that “forgiveness is a healthy practice because it saves you from a heart attack,” and “unforgiveness is like cancer. When you pile up wrongs in your heart it painfully burns and hurts like heartburn. Forgiveness is good for health and peace of mind.” An

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interviewee from Yumbe observed, “if you forgive somebody you feel free and comfortable, you even expect to live longer.”

Many participants in the study cited the potential effects of forgiveness not only on themselves but also on the peace of the community at large as their motivation for forgiveness – a fifth broad factor. When respondents were asked, “which of the following is a good reason to forgive?”, 68.75% answered “yes” to “because forgiveness brings healing to the surrounding community,” while 31.25% answered “no.” The potential of forgiveness to re-establish relationships in a community was illustrated by a question posed to those who had practiced forgiveness – again, a question that measures whether victims showed a seemingly unnatural empathy for the perpetrator – asking, “did you forgive because you thought it would help the perpetrator to heal?”, to which 57.62% answered “yes,” 30.24% answered “no,” and 12.14% answered “don’t know.” Others thought that forgiveness would help to bring peace, stability, and economic development to their community, and in some cases, to Uganda as a whole. Some called for a national process of forgiveness.

Many in the focus groups and interviews gave voice to the communal benefits of forgiveness. One interviewee in Yumbe, a community leader, outlined how forgiveness might be practiced socially: “Whether one fought to bring peace or not we are all equal. Now we feel that we must forgive each other. That is why we have not raised any question against anybody, but there is a feeling that we must also sit down and reconcile. We should agree that we committed crimes against our own people. Now that we have come back they are not pointing fingers at us and we are living together. We have seen the ex-combatants; we have actually forgiven each other; but we need that symbolic gesture culturally talking about truth telling and then eating together . . .” The same leader affirmed that forgiveness could contribute to sustainable peace building in Uganda, explaining, “[forgiveness] is what we are looking for; once we reconcile we all move ahead. This truth telling, when we do it, our conscience becomes clear and when we talk we talk confidently because you know that you are talking to a brother who doesn’t have ill feelings about

you.” He added, “we were to forgive [the perpetrators], we were to convince even the community to forgive them so that we have peace.” He even made the case that forgiveness abets development: “Without [forgiveness] there can be no development for the community,” he said, adding, “forgiveness rebuilds; it builds unity; it brings togetherness; then it can actually allow you to open your heart and to teach others so that they forgive and love.” He concluded, “the most important message is let’s forgive, let’s forget the past now, let’s now concentrate on how to sustain the peace we’ve got.”

Speaking of the capacity of forgiveness to integrate a community, another interviewee in Yumbe explained, “we are now experiencing and enjoying peace. There is no insecurity and the perpetrators are now part of the community that is enjoying peace. They are able to sustain themselves in business and agriculture, and those who lost their wives have been able to marry again and start new families. There is total peace now as a result of reconciliation and forgiveness.” From the Yumbe focus group came the comment, “we forgive for the purpose of peace to exist in the region,” and then, “[t]here is a need for a forgiveness process in order to have total forgiveness and . . . to spread to the next generation.” An interviewee in Amuria commented on the potential for forgiveness to bring together communal groups: “Forgiveness brings togetherness between the perpetrators and the victims, for example, the Karamojongs and the Iteso.” A focus group participant in Gulu spoke in similar terms, saying, “the northern war is just a reflection of retaliation for what had happened in the Luwero triangle; the issue of forgiveness should be a national issue. Our people have been inflicted with war and have to be taught the value of forgiveness and peace so that we become as one and, if possible, to avoid the use of guns and armed conflicts where innocents are being killed for nothing.” A focus group participant in Amuria held that the focus group process itself could be a source of wider forgiveness: “Forgiveness should start with us participants who have attended this meeting then spread to the religious leaders, churches and all the rest; this will make everyone start talking about forgiveness.” Finally, a focus group participant in Gulu put forth that forgiveness and reconciliation embody the meaning of justice: “True justice is reconciliation, the justice of

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healing wounds, a justice that involves forgiveness and reparations, involves truth telling and acknowledgment, and involves accountability that seeks to reintegrate former criminals into the society and restorative justice. Justice is wider and the world is searching in depth and it has the ability to bring healing in societies like Uganda.”

The sixth and final factor that led victims to forgive was a judgment about the complexity of the perpetrator’s motives. In many of Uganda’s armed conflicts, perpetrators of violence were forced at gunpoint to commit violence and atrocities. Knowing this, some victims were more willing to forgive perpetrators. An interviewee in Yumbe said, “we have forgiven the perpetrator and actually there is no need of putting it in our hearts that these perpetrators should be forgiven; they have to be forgiven because we don’t know their interest/reasons for violence.” An interviewee in Amuria mirrored empathetically, “we can forgive them because they are children and it is against their will.” The same person added, “we do not entirely blame the military and army because they are acting on orders and that is why we need to trace this thing up to the top leadership.”

In the survey, one question, posed to respondents who had practiced forgiveness, asked, “do you believe that the perpetrator was forced to commit the violence by another person?” A total of 44.31% answered “yes,” while 29.03% answered “no,” with a significant 26.66% answering “don’t know.” Another question, posed to the same group, asked, “do you believe that the perpetrator is responsible for the violence when you consider the pressure that he/she was under?” This time, 42.03% answered “yes,” 37.08% answered “no,” and 20.17% answered “don’t know.” Although a plurality of yesses obtained among the respondents, the closely competing percentage of nos arguably reflects a large number of victims willing to diminish perpetrators’ responsibility on account of the pressures they faced. Another question directly linked this factor to forgiveness, asking, “did you forgive because you thought that the perpetrator was not responsible for his/her crime (for example, he/she was forced to commit it)?” Answering “yes” were 44.15% of respondents who had practiced forgiveness, while 48.21% answered “no,” with 7.64% answering “don’t know.” Again, although fewer

victims cited perpetrators' duress as a reason for forgiveness than those who did not, the numbers who did were still high. It is important to remember that this question was only one in a battery of questions about the motives for forgiveness and was not exclusive of other motives.

Who Forgives?

The survey posed a number of questions designed to assess whether certain personal characteristics or environments affect the propensity of people to favor or to practice forgiveness. For instance, it cross-tabulated the sex of the respondent with his or her answers to key questions about forgiveness. Among scholars and activists, the relationship between sex and forgiveness is much debated. One side believes that forgiveness is a deed that women, especially victims of violence, practice to their peril, reinforcing a yielding dynamic that serves to oppress and disempower women. The other holds that forgiveness is reflective of a feminine genius for care and nurture and is therefore a contribution that women make to the world, one with special potential for building peace in the wake of armed violence. The survey also tests for religious membership, religious practice, age, income, education, and time passed since the date of the violence.

In general, the results of these tests were not strong; few of the factors show a sharp relationship to forgiveness. This inconclusiveness can itself be seen as a significant result, suggesting that the propensity to favor and practice forgiveness cuts across these factors and is dependent on more uniquely personal characteristics. For instance, the fact that the findings show no strong relationship between sex and forgiveness suggest that neither the positive nor the negative interpretation of women's propensity for forgiveness is borne out; there simply is no propensity, at least judging from the results of the present study.

What about religion? When religious affiliation is tabulated with questions measuring forgiveness, neither Anglican, Roman Catholic, nor Muslim populations diverge significantly from the general population in their propensity to forgive. The one exception is the category "Christian," which combines Seventh Day Adventists and Savedees (totaling 11.48% of

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respondents) and whose respondents favored forgiveness considerably more strongly than members of other religious groups. The data also show a relationship between religious practice and the practice of forgiveness. For instance, the more often respondents practice prayer the more they are willing both to favor forgiveness in their attitudes and to practice forgiveness when they are victims. Far less conclusive, however, is the relationship between attendance at religious worship and forgiveness.

The survey also measured whether the period of time between the violence that respondents witnessed or suffered might affect their posture towards forgiveness. The data show that respondents who lived in a context of violence between 1970 and 1980 favored forgiveness at a significantly higher rate than the general population, though victims of actual violence practiced forgiveness at a lower rate. For violence occurring between 1980 and 1990 and between 1990 and 2000, the number of respondents who favor and practice forgiveness is not consistently different than for the general population of respondents. For the periods 2000-2008 and 2009-present, however, both favor for and the actual practice of forgiveness exceeded that of the general population. It is difficult to know exactly how to interpret these data. Both in the earliest and in the most recent period of dates of violence, favor for forgiveness appears to be higher, and in the most recent period, the practice of forgiveness appears to be higher.

Sympathy for forgiveness also varied from region to region. To the question, “what would you like to see happen to members of rebel groups who committed human rights violations?,” 60.94% of the general population said “yes” to the forgiveness option (as reported above), but this varied sharply from region to region. Kasese and Teso were considerably higher in their favor at 73.3% and 75.8% respectively, while Gulu and Luwero were considerably lower at 41.4% and 52.3% respectively, and Yumbe was close to the norm at 60.7%. To the question, “what would you like to see happen to members of the Ugandan military who committed human rights violations?,” 53.9% of the general population said “yes” to the forgiveness choice, while 77% said “yes” in Kasese and 69.7% said “yes” in Teso, both well above the norm. Considerably below the norm were Luwero at 41.4%

and Gulu at 32.8%, while Yumbe was below the norm but closer to it at 46.2%. When victims of violence were asked, “Did you personally forgive the perpetrator of the act of violence against you?” Gulu, which was low in its favor for forgiveness, proved to have the highest rate of affirmative answers, namely 78.8%, as compared to the general population’s rate of 68.3%. Kasese and Teso were again high, each at 75.2%, while Luwero was lower at 64.8% and Yumbe was considerably lower at 45.7%.

Overall, it can be said that Kasese and Teso were consistently high in their respondents’ favor for forgiveness, that Gulu was highly ambiguous, that Luwero was consistently lower, and that Yumbe was close to the norm with the exception of the practice question. Despite the variation, it can also be said that support for forgiveness was significant across the districts, only dipping below 40% in the case of the attitudes of Gulu residents with respect to the Ugandan military. With respect to the practice of forgiveness, even the lowest district, Yumbe, was 45.7% while the highest districts were 75.2%.

Other factors proved inconclusive, showing no strong relationship to forgiveness. Among these were age, with respect to which rates of favor for forgiveness were somewhat higher among respondents 30 and above but not in a strong or systematic fashion, as well as income and education, which did not correlate strongly with forgiveness. Forgiveness is robust across variation in these variables.

Key Findings

The central findings of the report can be summarized as follows:

- » Ugandans view peace in their country as fragile and negative, meaning that while the shooting may have stopped, the conditions that promote the sustainability of peace, much less justice, are absent. The country remains riven by persistent disputes over land and wealth, weaknesses in the political and economic system, a lack of development aid, and a lack of implementation of appropriate transitional justice mechanisms such as trials, truth commissions, reparations, apologies, and memorialization.
- » There is widespread support for and practice of forgiveness in Uganda. It is fairly robust across districts.
- » Ugandans regard forgiveness not merely as a matter of relinquishment but also as one of constructing a better relationship with the perpetrator. The degree of restoration of relationship varied greatly. It was common for victims to forgive “in the heart” perpetrators who were not present.
- » Support for forgiveness is accompanied by support for a range of other measures, including repentance, truth telling, acknowledgment of wrongs, apology, accountability, compensation, reparations, and development aid. Still, Ugandans voiced support for forgiveness at high rates despite the fact that these measures were widely absent.
- » The strongest motivation for forgiveness among Ugandans is religion. Important also are tribal traditions, family traditions, the desire for psychological peace, the quest for peace in the community at large, and recognition of the complexity of perpetrators’ motives.

- » Religious leaders are strong enablers of forgiveness and Ugandans did not feel pressured to forgive by religious leaders.
- » In general, personal characteristics correlated weakly with forgiveness. It matters little for instance, whether one is male or female. Among religions, Protestant non-mainline Christians forgave at unusually high rates, while support for forgiveness correlates with the frequency of prayer. The period of time since the act of violence took place was related ambiguously to forgiveness while rates of forgiveness varied from region to region. Age, income and education were not correlated with forgiveness.

Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations for incorporating forgiveness into peacebuilding processes. They are drawn from our study of Uganda but can apply to any country that is seeking to build peace in the wake of armed conflict or dictatorship.

- » We recommend that those involved in the work of peacebuilding – whether they be governmental or non-governmental actors, working at the international, national, or local levels – incorporate forgiveness actively into their work. By overcoming hatred and revenge, forgiveness helps to quell the renewal of violence and allows people to interact with one another as citizens so that they can carry out the ordinary functions of economic and political cooperation, including economic development, commerce, and countless matters of governance. Cumulatively, forgiveness contributes to sustainable peace and economic development at the national level.
- » How a given organization ought to promote forgiveness will depend on what kind of organization it is and in what context it operates. It is critical that forgiveness not be pressured, required, or even heavily

scripted. It is by nature an inward act and thus requires freedom for its authenticity. Particularly well suited to promoting forgiveness are religious communities as well as secular civil society organizations such as NGOs dedicated to the healing of victims. Here, the right balance between teaching and recommending forgiveness without pressuring persons to pursue it can best be struck.

- » Forgiveness ought to be incorporated far more into transitional justice processes than is currently the case. Today, trials and truth commissions enjoy pride of place in global transitional justice processes, with reparations, lustration, apologies, and amnesties playing an important role as well. Forgiveness is complementary to these practices and ought to be coordinated with them according to the context. For instance, forgiveness might be included in reintegration processes such as those in Uganda made possible by the Amnesty Act of 2000. Counseling and educational processes could include teachings on forgiveness. Another example of integration comes from Rwanda, where churches counseled their members in forgiveness prior to their participation in village-level gacaca courts that addressed the crimes committed during the 1994 genocide.
- » Political, religious and tribal leaders are in a strong position to advocate forgiveness. Their moral authority is a crucial asset, as are actions such as speeches and exemplary gestures through which they commend forgiveness. An outstanding model is South African President Nelson Mandela, who forgave leaders and agents of the apartheid government after South Africa's transition to multiracial democracy in 1994. Mandela did not directly forgive in the name of others or make forgiveness into a formal program or procedure, but rather his example inspired many others to forgive.
- » As our study shows, the family is an important forum for teaching peace and forgiveness. In Uganda, as is true elsewhere, the family

system needs to be restored in the wake of war.

- » Traditional rituals are also strong forums for promoting forgiveness in Uganda and in other countries where they are found. Governments and NGOs, both domestic and overseas, may promote traditional rituals with financial and other resources, though they also ought to respect the autonomy of traditional leaders in carrying them out. Sierra Leone and Timor Leste, for instances, are countries where these rituals have been utilized for peacebuilding. Sierra Leone's Fambul Tok is an outstanding example. Traditional rituals tend to reflect a holistic vision of reconciliation, often combining truth-telling, reparations, apology, accountability, and a meal that promotes the restoration of the community. Elaborate rituals like mato oput in Northern Uganda, while they contain excellent potential for promoting forgiveness and reconciliation, often will not be possible because of the ample time and resources that they require. Less elaborate rituals, involving apology, forgiveness, and the sacrifice of an animal, can be practiced widely among a population.

Appendix One: The Survey Instrument

Basic Information

Q01. In what language was the interview conducted?

Part I: Information on Individual

Q02. Are you male or female?

☐ Male

☐ Female

Q03. What is your age in years? _____

Q04. In what city or village do you currently live? _____

Q05. What is your current marital status?

☐ Single

☐ Married

☐ Married polygamously

☐ Separated

☐ Divorced

☐ Widowed

Q06. Do you have children?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Q07. If yes, how many? _____

Q08. Do you speak English

☐ No

☐ Yes

Q09. What language do you speak primarily at home?

☐ English

☐ Luganda

☐ Ganda

☐ Swahili

- ☐ Lingomba
- ☐ Alur
- ☐ Langi
- ☐ Yumba
- ☐ Rutooro
- ☐ Rukonjo
- ☐ Acholi
- ☐ Other _____

Q10. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ No school
- ☐ Some primary school (P1-P6, but not P7)
- ☐ Completed primary school (completed P7)
- ☐ Vocational School
- ☐ Some secondary school (S1-S3, but not S4)
- ☐ Completed secondary school or "O" level
- ☐ Completed advanced level or "A" level
- ☐ Some university (not complete but started)
- ☐ Completed university education
- ☐ Completed higher than university undergraduate education

Q11. If you do not mind telling me, how much money do you (along with your spouse if you are married) earn on average every month (in Shillings)?

_____ Shillings

Part II: Religiosity

Q12. What is your religion? (Choose one)

- ☐ Anglican
- ☐ Roman Catholic
- ☐ Seventh Day Adventist
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Savedees
- ☐ Traditional African
- ☐ Other
- ☐ None
- ☐ No response

Q13. How often have you attended religious services during the last year?

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Please do not count weddings and funerals. (Choose one)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Once or twice
- ☐ Three to six times
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Two or more times a week

Q14. Which one of the following statements best describes your practice of prayer or religious meditation? (Choose one)

- ☐ I never pray
- ☐ I pray only during formal ceremonies
- ☐ I usually pray during times of stress or need but rarely at any other time
- ☐ Prayer is a regular part of my daily life

Part III: Attitudes Towards Justice and Politics

Q15. Is it important to you that persons responsible for abuses in Uganda are tried through the judicial system for their actions? (If “No,” skip)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Don't know

Q16. Who should be tried? (Read options; check all that apply)

- ☐ Leaders of the government
- ☐ Leaders of the army
- ☐ Ordinary soldiers in the army
- ☐ The police
- ☐ Leaders of rebel groups
- ☐ Members of rebel groups
- ☐ Other, specify _____

Q17. Among members of armed forces who fought in opposition to the government, who should receive amnesty? (Choose one)

- ☐ No one
- ☐ Top leaders
- ☐ Ordinary members but not top leaders
- ☐ Everyone

Q18. What would you require those who are amnestied to do before you accept them back into your community? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Confess their wrongdoing
- ☐ Apologize
- ☐ Undergo traditional ceremony
- ☐ Give compensation to the victims
- ☐ Undergo trial
- ☐ Receive counseling
- ☐ Nothing needs to be done
- ☐ Other, specify _____
- ☐ Uncertain
- ☐ Don't know

Q19. What would you like to see happen to members of rebel groups who committed human rights violations? (Read options; check all that apply)

- ☐ Capture and kill them
- ☐ Put them on trial and then kill them
- ☐ Put them on trial and then in prison
- ☐ Have them compensate the victim
- ☐ Have them confess
- ☐ Reintegrate them into the community
- ☐ Reconcile with them
- ☐ Grant them amnesty
- ☐ Forgive them
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Other, specify _____

Q20. What would you like to see happen to members of the Ugandan military who committed human rights violations? (Read options; check all that apply)

- ☐ Capture and kill them
- ☐ Put them on trial and then kill them
- ☐ Put them on trial and then in prison
- ☐ Have them compensate the victim
- ☐ Have them confess
- ☐ Reintegrate them into the community
- ☐ Reconcile with them
- ☐ Grant them amnesty
- ☐ Forgive them
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Other, specify _____

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Q21. When should a victim forgive a perpetrator for a violation of the victim's human rights in the context of armed violence? (Choose one)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Only upon the perpetrator's apology
- ☐ Only upon material reparations or compensation from the perpetrator
- ☐ Only after the victim has healed
- ☐ Always

Q22. If you answered "Never" to Question 21, then, go to Q23. Otherwise, answer: Which of the following is a good reason to forgive? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Because forgiveness is the teaching of Christianity
- ☐ Because forgiveness is the teaching of Islam
- ☐ Because forgiveness is valued in my culture
- ☐ Because forgiveness allows a victim to be healed from anger
- ☐ Because forgiveness brings psychological relief to the perpetrator
- ☐ Because forgiveness brings healing to the surrounding community

Q23. If you answered "Never" to Question 21, then please indicate the reasons why. (Check all that apply)

- ☐ I am not a member of a religion that teaches forgiveness
- ☐ I am not a member of a culture that teaches forgiveness
- ☐ Forgiveness violates the dignity of the victim
- ☐ Forgiveness damages the emotional health of a victim
- ☐ Forgiveness negates just punishment for serious crimes
- ☐ Forgiveness contributes to a culture of impunity
- ☐ Forgiveness contributes to a false peace
- ☐ Other, please specify _____
- ☐ I don't know

Read to respondent: Please indicate whether you disagree, agree, or are not sure if you agree with the following statements about the political violence that has taken place in your region. Political violence is violence that takes place within an armed conflict and was perpetrated by the army of the Government of Uganda or an armed resistance group.

Statement	Disagree	Agree	Not sure
Q24.1. Perpetrators of violence in my region have been held accountable for their crimes.			
Q24.2. Victims of violence in my region have been adequately compensated for their suffering.			
Q24.3 Leaders of organized armed groups that were involved in violence in my region have adequately apologized for wrongs they committed.			
Q24.4. People in my region have practiced forgiveness widely in the aftermath of armed violence.			
Q24.5 It is good for victims to practice forgiveness in the aftermath of armed violence.			
Q24.6. Religious leaders should encourage their followers to practice forgiveness.			
Q24.7. Political leaders should encourage citizens to practice forgiveness.			
Q24.8. Tribal leaders should encourage their members to practice forgiveness.			
Q24.9. It is good for members of tribes to practice forgiveness within tribal rituals of reconciliation.			
Q24.10 Victims should practice forgiveness only after their perpetrators have apologized.			
Q24.11 Victims should practice forgiveness only after they have been compensated financially for their suffering.			
Q24.12 Victims should practice forgiveness only after their perpetrators have been punished through a court of law.			
Q24.13 Victims should practice forgiveness only when the truth has been told about the violence they have suffered.			

Part IV: Questions on Experience of Violence

Did you experience any of the following events between 1970 and today? Check all that apply. Please say yes only if this event was the result of political violence, meaning that it took place within an armed conflict and was perpetrated by the army of the Government of Uganda or an armed resistance group.

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Question	No	Yes	Don't Know
Q25.1. I was abducted			
Q25.2. A child of mine was abducted			
Q25.3. A family member who was not a child was abducted			
Q25.4. A close friend was abducted			
Q25.5. I was the victim of violence			
Q25.6. A family member was the victim of violence			
Q25.7 A close friend was the victim of violence			
Q25.8 I was detained, arrested, or imprisoned			
Q25.9 A family member was detained, arrested, or imprisoned			
Q25.10 A close friend was detained, arrested, or imprisoned			
Q25.11 A family member disappeared			
Q25.12 A close friend disappeared			
Q25.13 I was forced to leave my home village			
Q25.14 A family member had to flee his/her home because his/her life was threatened			
Q25.15 A close friend had to flee his/her home because his/her life was threatened			
Q25.16 A member of my family was killed by violence			
Q25.17 A close friend was killed by violence			
Q25.18 I was forced to live in a camp for displaced people			
Q25.19 My home or valuable property was damaged or destroyed			

Q25.20 I saw someone being killed			
Q25.21 I saw someone being seriously injured or harmed			
Q25.22 I felt my life was constantly under threat because of the political violence in my community			

Q25.23 I (or a family member, or a close friend) experienced another type of violence, trauma, or human right violation not listed above. Please specify.

If the respondent answered all of Question 25 “No” (and left 25.23 blank) then end the survey here. Otherwise, proceed ahead.

Q26. When did the event(s) to which you responded “Yes” occur? (It is possible to check more than one)

- ☐ 1970-1980
- ☐ 1980-1990
- ☐ 1990-2000
- ☐ 2000-2008
- ☐ 2009-present

Q27. For the events that you experienced, please indicate to which party or organization the person who committed the act belonged. (It is possible to check more than one)

- ☐ Army of the Government of Uganda
- ☐ An opposition armed force
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- ☐ Don't know

Part V: Questions on Political Violence

Questions on Attitudes Towards The Act of Political Violence that the Respondent Has Suffered

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Read to Respondent: We want to know whether you believe that the wrongs have been put right for the act of political violence committed against you. Please answer the questions below. Please answer it with respect to the worst violation you (or your family member or close friend) experienced.

Question	No	Yes	Don'tknow
Q28.1 Have you (or your family member, or close friend) received fair payment from the government for your suffering?			
Q28.2 Has the person(s) who committed the violence been punished enough?			
Q28.3 Are you satisfied with the opportunities you have been given to tell other people the story about this violence?			
Q28.4 Has the person(s) who committed the violence apologized to your satisfaction?			
Q28.5 Has society recognized the violence to your satisfaction?			
Q28.6 Has enough been done to find out the truth about what happened?			
Q28.7 Has the person who committed the violence against you been punished enough?			
Q28.8 Has the person who committed the violence expressed remorse to your satisfaction?			
Q28.9 I approve of the Amnesty Act of 2000, which offered amnesty to members of the Lord's Resistance Army who were willing to put down their arms.			
Q28.10 Do you believe that the perpetrator was forced to commit the violence by another person?			
Q28.11 Do you believe that the perpetrator is responsible for the violence when you consider the pressure that he/she was under?			

Read To Respondent: Now we would like you to think of the person who was

responsible for the worst human rights violations committed against you [or your family member or your close friend]. If you don't know the specific person who was responsible, please think of the person who you believe was most responsible.

Question	No	Yes	Don't know
Q29.1 Have you had any interaction with the person after the victimization? (If "No", skip to Q30.1)			
Q29.2 Has the person ever threatened to hurt you again in any way?			
Q29.3 Has the person acted like he/she did nothing wrong?			
Q29.4 Has the person confessed to what he/she did?			
Q29.5 Has the person apologized for what he/she did? (If "No", skip to Q29.7)			
Q29.6 Do you believe the apology was sincere?			
Q29.7 Has the person demonstrated that he/she feels bad about what he/she did?			
Q29.8 Has the person offered some form of compensation for what he/she did?			
Q29.9 Has the person requested you forgive him/her for what he/she did? (If "No", skip to Q29.11)			
Q29.10 Do you believe the request was sincere?			
Q29.11 Has the leader of the perpetrator's organization apologized for what was done to you? (If "No", skip to Q30.1)			
Q29.12 Do you believe the apology was sincere?			

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Question	No	Yes	D o n ' t know
Q30.1 Did the perpetrator receive amnesty from the government for his/her acts of violence? (If "No", skip to Q30.3)			
Q30.2 Do you consider this grant of amnesty an act of forgiveness on the part of the government?			
Q30.3 Do you believe that he/she should have been granted amnesty?			
Q30.4. Did you personally forgive the perpetrator of the act of violence against you? (If "No", skip to Q31.1)			
Q30.5 Did you express forgiveness to the perpetrator in words? (If "No", skip to Q30.9)			
Q30.6 Did you forgive the perpetrator through your actions?			
Q30.7 Did you forgive a perpetrator who was not present, forgiving him/her in your mind or heart but not through words or actions?			
Q30.8 To your knowledge, is the perpetrator alive?			
Q30.9 Did the perpetrator apologize before you forgave? (If "No", skip to Q30.12)			
Q30.10 Do you believe that the apology was sincere?			
Q30.11 Was your forgiveness conditional upon his apology? (Meaning that you required his/her apology in order to forgive.)			
Q30.12 Did your act of forgiveness lead the perpetrator to apologize?			
Q30.13 Did the perpetrator offer any reparations or perform any act of repair before you forgave? (If "No", skip to Q30.15)			

Q30.14 Was your forgiveness conditional upon his act of reparation? (Meaning that you required the reparation in order to forgive.)			
Q30.15 Did your act of forgiveness lead the perpetrator to perform an act of reparation?			
Q30.16 Did you forgive because of your religious beliefs?			
Q30.17 Did you forgive because of your tribal traditions?			
Q30.18 Did you forgive because of your political beliefs?			
Q30.19 Did you forgive because you thought that forgiveness would make you less anxious?			
Q30.20 Did you forgive because you thought that forgiveness would make you less angry?			
Q30.21 Did you forgive because you thought it would help the perpetrator to heal?			
Q30.22 Did you forgive because you thought that the perpetrator was not responsible for his/her crime (for example, he/she was forced to commit it)?			
Q30.23 Did you forgive within the context of a tribal ritual?			
Q30.24 Did you forgive within the context of a government-led amnesty process?			
Q30.25 Did you feel greater peace or less anxiety or stress after you forgave?			
Q30.26 Did friends or family encourage you to forgive?			
Q30.27 Did friends or family put pressure on you to forgive?			
Q30.28 Did a religious leader encourage you to forgive?			
Q30.29 Did a religious leader put pressure on you to forgive?			

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Q30.30 Did a political leader or government official encourage you to forgive?			
Q30.31 Did a political leader or government official put pressure on you to forgive?			

Complete the following section only if the answer to Q30.4 is “No.” Otherwise, the survey is complete.

Question	No	Yes	D o n ’ t know
Q31.1 Did you refuse to forgive the perpetrator because you believe he/she does not deserve forgiveness?			
Q31.2 Did you refuse to forgive the perpetrator because he/she did not apologize for his crime against you?			
Q31.3 Did you refuse to forgive the perpetrator because he/she did not make an act of reparation for his crime against you?			
Q31.4 Did you refuse to forgive the perpetrator because he/she was not punished for his crime against you?			
Q31.5 Did you refuse to forgive the perpetrator because the government already forgave the perpetrator through granting him/her amnesty?			

*Some of the questions in the survey have been borrowed from questions in other survey instruments. Questions 13, 14, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, and 31 borrowed from a survey instrument developed by Dr. Jeffrey Sonis of the University of North Carolina, the lead author of a study of the effects of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission sponsored by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Capetown, South Africa. Questions 18, 19, and 20 are drawn from Phuong Pham et. al., *Forgotten Voices: A Population-Based Survey of Attitudes about Peace and Justice in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley and the International Center for Transitional Justice, July 2005.*

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