

Studying in Armed Conflict

*Challenges of Secondary Education for Children
affected by Conflict in Northern Uganda.*



A study carried out by

UGANDA CHILD RIGHTS NGO NETWORK

Plot 18 Tugore Crescent, Kamwokya

P.O.BOX 10293, Kampala

Tel : 041-532131/041-543548

Fax : 041-543548

Email : ucrnn@utlonline.co.ug



TROCAIRE
Working for a Just World

Studying in Armed Conflict

Challenges of Secondary Education for Children affected by Conflict in Northern Uganda.

A study carried out by

UGANDA CHILD RIGHTS NGO NETWORK

Plot 18 Tugore Crescent, Kamwokya

P.O.BOX 10293, Kampala

Tel : 041-532131/041-543548

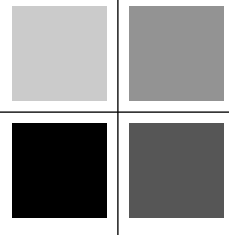
Fax : 041-543548

Email : ucrn@utlonline.co.ug



Studying in Armed Conflict





Acknowledgements

The executive committee and members of Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) secretariat express their appreciation to all people whose contribution and support made this analysis a success. In a special way we thank, first and foremost Mr. Ejoy Xavier for his intellectual contribution during the analysis of the challenges of Secondary Education for children in conflict affected areas.

We also thank all UCRNN member organizations and partners whose inspiration and support made the analysis possible, especially all those who provided information during the consultative meetings.

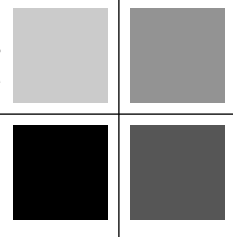
Our sincere thanks also go to Mrs. Eunice Apio Otuka for the technical assistance rendered to the Network which greatly facilitated the writing of this report.

We can not thank enough our partners Trocaire for the financial support which enabled us to complete this report.

Finally I would like to reiterate our sincere thanks to all our membership, Partners and fiends for your contribution in the child rights discourse. We greatly value your partnership and we hope for continued collaboration.

Content

Acknowledgements	iii
Acronyms and Abbreviations	v
Foreword	□
1.0 Background to the study	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.1 Education as a right	1
1.1.1 International instruments	1
1.1.2 National level Commitments	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	2
1.3 Methodology of the Study	3
1.3.1 Limitations of the study methodology	3
2.0 Findings of the study	5
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Performances at Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE)	6
2.3 Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools	6
2.4 Absorption into Vocational Secondary Schools	7
2.5 Absorption into Secondary Schools	8
2.5.0 Inadequate data on Enrollment and Retention	9
2.5.1 Enrollment	□
2.5.2 Retention	□
3.0 Interventions in providing education for children affected by conflict	13
3.1 Bursary Schemes under the Ministry of Education	13
3.2 Scholarships and Bursaries	14
3.3 Bursary Schemes in Kitgum District	15
4.0 Weaknesses of existing interventions	17
4.1 Lack of Coordination	17
4.2 Duplication	17
4.3 Limited Monitoring of existing Schemes	17
4.4 Unreliable Bursary Schemes	18
4.5 Minimal Central Government involvement	18
5.0 Conclusion and recommendations	19
5.1 Introduction	19
5.2 Recommendations for Action	19



Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEI:	Acholi Education Initiative
ARLPI:	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
AVSI:	Associazione Volontari Servizio Internazionale
CCF:	Christian Children's Fund
COU:	Church of Uganda
CPA:	Concerned Parents Association
CRC :	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
FAWE:	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FHI:	Food for the Hungry International
GOU :	Government of Uganda
IDP:	Internally Displace Persons
IRC:	International Rescue Committee
KICWA:	Kitgum Concerned Women's Association
LRA :	Lord's Resistance Army
NGOs :	Non Governmental Organisations
PLE :	Primary Leaving Examinations
UPE :	Universal Primary Education



Foreword

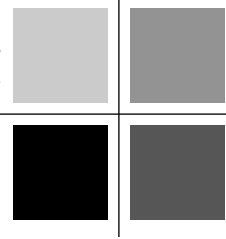
Education is a fundamental basic human right with intrinsic power for social transformation. According to Delors' Commission (1993), it is "a treasure within", which all children should be given a chance to look for. For the children of northern Uganda besieged by conflict, education offers a sense of continuity as it gives shape and structure to children's lives. When everything is chaos, schools can be a haven of security that is vital to the well-being of war affected children and their communities.

The conflict in northern and eastern Uganda has greatly undermined the economic production of most parents and as such education for their children becomes secondary in priority. This study makes a review of the available initiatives to come to the rescue of children. However, the vast inconsistency in mobilization and coordination of resources for war affected children is one of the most brutal inequalities in the realization of child right to education.

UCRNN perceive education as a crucial tool for mitigating the effects of conflict on children and a means of rebuilding their lives shattered by the conflict. This review makes a plea for compassion; commitment and tenacity need to make education for children affected by armed conflict a priority.

My humble prayer is that this report inspires you to direct effort and resources towards the promotion of Secondary education for children in conflict affected areas.

Stella Ayo- Odongo
National Programme Coordinator
Uganda Child Rights NGO Network



1.0 Background to the study

1.1 Introduction

Uganda Child Rights NGO Network is a coalition of 74 Child focussed Organisations in Uganda. UCRNN was established in 1997, initially to write the first NGO shadow report to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has since been at the forefront of advocating for Child rights in Uganda. It has through its work actively participated in the establishments of frameworks, Policies and Laws to guide the implementation of Programmes promoting the rights and welfare of Children in Uganda.

1.1 Education as a right

Education is a key investment for the social development of any Country. Its impact on the transformation of the individual is direct as well as indirect ranging from the development of Skills for employment, change of behaviour and improvement of the personal well-being. It is therefore, through education that Children are molded into responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development of the Country. More importantly, the fact that education enables Children to acquire life skills for survival and development makes it a basic right for every one. It is therefore incumbent upon every society to ensure all Children have access to education in order for them to realize their full potential as members of that society.

1.1.1 International instruments

Education is universally recognized as a basic right for all Children . Uganda has made a formal commitment to various international instruments including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that it signed and ratified in 1992. Within Uganda itself, the Convention has served as a guide to the development of legislative and Policy frameworks. In 2000, Uganda also signed the Education For All goals in the World Education Forum in Dakar Senegal, which among others pledges free and compulsory education for all by the year 2015. While the commitments made to the international Child rights instruments by Uganda deserve to be lauded, it is the development of local mechanisms and implementation of Policies that translates these commitments to the benefit of the ordinary

1.1.2 National level Commitments

The 1995 Constitution and the 1996 Children's Statute (now Children's Act 2000), effectively domesticated the Convention on the Rights of the Child, acknowledging Education as a right in Uganda. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education Policy has been a visible expression of Uganda's commitment to promoting Education for all. That enrolment into Primary Schools has more than doubled since the introduction of UPE is testimony to what the Policy has achieved albeit concerns over the quality of education. Whereas Uganda's commitment to the provision of

¹ United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC)

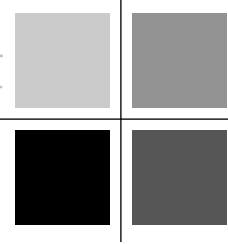
education has been lauded, different groups of Children especially those in difficult circumstances are still missing out of formal education. Notable among these groups are the Children affected by conflict. While there have been national concerns over the quality of education due to the high pupil to teacher ratio, armed conflict particularly creates inequality between education for Children affected and other students.

Two decades of conflict in Northern Uganda has denied many Children their right to have access to education. The conflict referred to as the World's biggest forgotten emergency has had devastating costs on the ordinary population. LRA's methods of warfare have been ruthless targeting innocent civilians with mass abduction of Children, burning of Schools, looting of property and maiming of civilians has created a state of uncertainty, desperation and deprivation with negative impacts on education. In 2002, there was a new spate of unrest when under "operation iron fist"; the Uganda People's Defense Forces launched an operation into Southern Sudan. This resulted into a new counter offensive where the LRA spread to Eastern and North Eastern Uganda with devastating effects. It was a time when the conflict hitherto restricted to the Acholi sub region spread to parts of Teso, Lango and Karamoja. Hence, this forced people into protected Internally Displaced people's camps with poor living conditions all over the region. Education for Children in the camp setting also became difficult as traditional Schools were deserted and most Children opted for protection in the IDP camps. In response to this, there emerged the phenomenon of learning centers that was simply an amalgamation of four to five displaced schools in one setting, most often overcrowded and not ideal learning environment. One of the major drawbacks of the conflict is the economic loss for the region, with whole communities falling out of their traditional economic activities of subsistence agriculture, fishing, and retail business among others. Loss of income also had a direct impact on the ability of the people to send their Children to School.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Conflict between the Lords Resistance Army and the Uganda People's Defense Forces in Northern Uganda has seen heavy effects on ordinary people in the region and the neighboring areas for the last 20 years. Over all, the physical destruction to property and lives has to varying degrees received notable recognition by various stakeholders. Every time mention is made of the conflict in Northern Uganda, disproportionate emphasis seems to lean towards maiming, abductions, looting, displacements, and diseases which are the primary and most visible effects of the conflict. However, the social and usually secondary effects of the conflict have in turn received little attention at this stage of the conflict. This study is therefore an attempt to unveil the hidden face of the conflict that ranges from the displacement of people from what they once called home, to the disruption of their livelihoods, social values as the population searches for safety and security in congested IDP camps. Education for Children affected by conflict too, has been lost or at the very least understated by analysts in the debates on the conflict.

Uganda has been lauded for its implementation of the Universal Primary Education Policy, which allows Children all over the Country to access free primary education. There is no doubt that



UPE Policy has transformed the face of the Education Sector in Uganda, with enrolment more than doubling in less than a decade of its implementation. There have been general concerns over the quality of education and retention of Children. In the case for Northern Uganda, conflict has remained the greatest challenge to education for the Children there in accessing education. First, the conflict has distorted livelihoods and the earning capacity of the parents and secondly, the conflict has been a threat to the physical security of the children who have to constantly brave abductions and bullets in order to be in School. The paper is therefore, an assessment of the impact of the conflict on the transition of primary pupils to secondary schools.

This research studies the post primary transition rates of the pupils from Northern Uganda from Primary School to Secondary and other technical institutions. It focuses on the transitional rates, retention in Secondary schools and analyses the bursary schemes available to students affected by conflict in Northern Uganda. Noting the challenges education of Children in this region face, the research compares opportunities to Children in the areas affected by conflict with those in areas that are considered normal. In so doing, it assesses the interventions made for education of Children affected by conflict by the various duty bearers and stakeholders. The recommendations arising from the analysis are targeted to inform Policy advocacy and offer pointers for Policy reform.

1.3 Methodology of the Study

Various methods were used in the collection of information. The study started with the review of available literature on education and related to the conflict in Northern Uganda. Additionally, international and national legislations and Policy instruments have also been reviewed for this study.

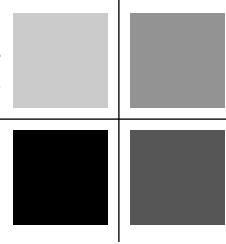
Key informant interviews were also conducted in the districts of Lira, Gulu and Kitgum; all affected by conflict. Four other Districts not affected by the conflict; Kampala, Mbarara, Masaka and Wakiso were also selected for the purposes of comparison of access to secondary education for the Children in a normal environment. Interviews targeted Head teachers and teachers of different Secondary Schools, District inspectors of Schools, District Education Officers, or other officials responsible for education in each of the selected District. The interviews also targeted some NGOs, CSOs and international humanitarian agencies engaged in provision of education services and scholarships in the region.

1.3.1 Limitations of the study methodology

The methodology adopted gives information on the challenges of education faced by Children affected by conflict in Northern Uganda, the bursaries available to the students and the administration of the schemes. Where as the study uses specific cases to describe the problem, it does not present a comprehensive quantitative analysis of the problem. Owing to the vast geographical coverage and insecurity in the study area at the time of data collection, the study relied on a limited sample that was purposively selected. While the study covered the districts of Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Lira,



the conflict has taken longer in the first three districts than in Lira and have accordingly attracted more emphasis in this study. There was generally limited data on Secondary School education in the region and coupled with the vastness of the region and insecurity, this study falls short of providing a detailed quantitative analysis of the problem. The findings of this study are therefore indicative and do not reflect an aggregation of the situation in Northern Uganda. Nevertheless, the methodology was adequate enough in highlighting the issues surrounding education for Children affected by conflict for appropriate intervention.



2.0 Findings of the study

2.1 Introduction

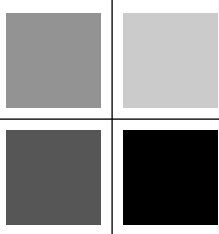
Education remains one of the strongest building blocks for development; the most important investment any Country can make. It is through education that Children are transformed into responsible citizens contributing to the development of the Country while improving their health, socialization and welfare. Education has been recognized as a basic right by both national and international legal instruments . By recognizing education as a right in its legal frameworks, Uganda has made a commitment to provide education to all its citizens without any discrimination. It therefore becomes an obligation on the Government of Uganda to educate all its citizens.

The biggest concern is however, the transition of Primary leavers to Secondary and technical Schools. As Children complete Primary School, it dawns on parents that they have to pay School fees for their Children. And for many parents who have been used to free primary education under the UPE Policy, payment of School fees becomes a big struggle especially in the first year in School. The laxity and inability of parents in playing their role of providing School fees in the first years of secondary education, remains to the single most cause of school dropout . Secondary education therefore becomes limited to those who are able to afford, making the right to education restricted to a few, leaving out many without realizing their potential in secondary Schools. Yet, Primary School leavers have no specific skills for employment in the formal sector, yet are prone to the worst forms of Child labour. Many end up as domestic workers, street Children and become exposed to the risk of sexual abuse. Premised in this argument, the UPPET about to be launched in the first term of 2007 should take cognisance of this fact and adress the unique needs of children in conflict affected areas.

Whereas limited access to secondary education is a general state of affairs for all Children, the case worsens for Children affected by conflict due to the negative effects of the war. Children in conflict ridden Northern Uganda are often at the risk of abduction, poverty and lack basic facilities and therefore, more susceptible to drop out of School than average Children in normal setting. Even with UPPET, transition to Secondary School and the retention for this category of students has therefore become a major challenge that needs urgent Policy interventions for Uganda to realize its commitment to provide education for all as agreed in the Dakar World Education Forum. In particular, Uganda as a signatory has an obligation to ensure that girls and children in difficult circumstances have access to free and compulsory education by the year 2015 . If the trend of education in the conflict area continues in its current form, this goal is not going to be met. Therefore the UPPET policy in this regard should be refocused

³ The UNCRC, African Charter on the welfare and rights of the Child and the 1995 Constitution of Uganda consider education as a right.

⁴ Interview with the Headmaster Lubiri Secondary School.



This research reveals the status of Children in conflict areas of Northern Uganda who complete primary Seven. It picks on the most vulnerable section of the country where civil war has raged on for the last two decades and reduced the people to living in extreme poverty and inhuman conditions. The assessment of the trend in progress in education has been done in comparison with the status of children in normal environments.

2.2. Performances at Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE)

In the last four years, the Districts of Gulu, Lira and Apac have performed relatively well despite being in conflict areas. In comparative analysis with the districts not affected by conflict, their performance is slightly better. On average 67% of the PLE candidates in Northern Uganda pass their examinations compared to 62% of the districts not affected by conflict. This can only be attributed to the resilience of the pupils in these areas as a respondent in Kitgum summed it up: “... They have all reasons not to be in School. But it is the last hope that they have for their future...” A further analysis of the performance reveals that such a comparison is deceptive on the severity of the problem. The study established that many pupils in Gulu and Kitgum districts opt to repeat Primary Seven once their parents fail to pay School fees in Secondary Schools. This they do in the hope that in future they may secure a Scholarship if they excelled. Hence, a comparison based on such a premise is not only superficial but also misleading

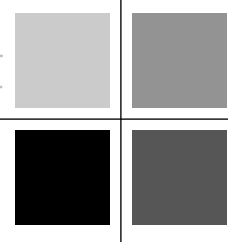
Clearly therefore, there is no reason to celebrate yet. A further analysis of the performance in PLE reveals that the passes of pupils in non-conflict areas are of better grades (Division I and II) than in areas affected by conflict; majority of which are in Division III. In addition, conditions of Primary Schools in the conflict-affected districts especially in the IDP camps are miserable, with facilities overstretched. The Camps have on average about 5 learning centers with inadequate instructional materials, poorly trained teachers and a very high pupil to teacher ratio among others. All of these make education a burden to already traumatized Children.

2.3 Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools

Traditionally, selection of students for admission to Secondary Schools and other institutions was done centrally under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. However, with liberalization of the education sector, Private institutions now have their independent admission criteria and process. Whereas Primary Schools have got records of Primary Seven leavers, they do not have an idea of what happens to the pupils when they leave school after P.7. On the other hand, secondary Schools and the District Education office have information on the number of students joining secondary Schools in the district. However, this information has not been synchronized with that on those who complete Primary School. As such data on transition of primary pupils to Secondary and other technical colleges is not readily available to the District Education officer. While in Northern Uganda, many pupils who fail to join Secondary School opt to rebound Primary Seven with the hope of getting Scholarships some time later. A few of the students join secondary schools in the neighbouring districts or even in other parts of the Country, which are much secure.

5 Goal 2 of the Education For All goals 2000.

6 Interview with the Headmaster, Kitgum Integrated College, 22nd Sept. 2005



It is therefore difficult to ascertain the rates of transition to secondary school at their district of origin.

This study was however, able to obtain dropout rates in some of the Schools surveyed. Many reasons have been advanced for the high dropout rates of students in the conflict affected areas but the dominant one was the failure to pay School fees. Other factors included indiscipline, pregnancy among girls, change of Schools, abduction among others. Children who fail to raise school fees for joining secondary premise all their hope in the government. They have been anxiously waiting for Universal Secondary Education since it was pronounced by His Excellency, The President of Uganda as part of his campaign manifesto. Leaving out such children therefore will be betrayal to their aspirations. To bring such children on board given their unique situation, the eligibility criteria for accessing UPPET need to be revisited.

In Y.Y. Okot Memorial Secondary School in Kitgum District, there is a typical case of the challenges Child headed families encounter in their education. The Headmistress of the School recounts the experience of a girl who had to drop out of School despite being on a FAWE Scholarship. News that her parents had been killed forced her to leave School and fend for her younger siblings. “The challenges are bigger than the lack of School fees”, the Headmistress emphasizes.

Interview with the Headmistress, 22nd September 2005

2.4 Absorption into Vocational Secondary Schools

Nationally, the rates of enrolment of P.7 leavers into Vocational Secondary Schools are very low due to a bias towards general Secondary education. Besides, most Vocational Schools admit students with qualifications of O’level onwards. As such Vocational education has not been emphasized enough by the Government. The draft costed educational Policy framework for the disadvantaged Children is yet to be finalized and implemented. Yet, the need of Vocational or non-formal education for Children affected by conflict is more apparent than ever. Children returning from captivity are often uncomfortable to fit in formal school setting partly due to their age difference but largely due to knowledge gap. Vocational education is therefore, a more appropriate option that needs to be made available in order to respond to the education needs of this category of Children.

However, vocational institutions are very few in number mostly operated by Non-Governmental Organizations or Private Proprietors. In the war torn Northern Uganda, majority of the P.7 leavers cannot afford to transit to general Secondary Schools mainly due to poverty aggravated by the conflict. It is particularly difficult for Child headed families, who are not able to raise income to support their families. For a Child head of the family, going to School is an extra burden and difficult decision to make especially if he or she has to fend for the other siblings. Not even a scholarship or bursary would keep such a student in School. In Y.Y. Memorial College in Kitgum district for example, a girl had to drop out of School and fend for her siblings when her parents

7 Interview with the District Education Officer Rubaga Division, Kampala
8 Interview with the Headmaster Oxfard College, Kitgum.

were killed, despite being on a FAWE Scholarship . In day Schools, School attendance is severely affected by relief distribution days as many Child heads of families scramble to get their portion of food, let a lone the general excitement of the exercise that dissuades students from going to School. Technical Education therefore becomes critical for such children and the government should address it seriously.

In addition, there is no clear and consistent procedure, let alone a Policy on vocational education being enforced. The assortment of private and public institutions that offer vocational education lack coordination on the curriculum, length of the training and awards received. Vocational education has by design remained the domain of boys with emphasis put on bricklaying, building and mechanics with little consideration of the needs of the girls. It is therefore, unrealistic to emphasize vocational training for Primary School leavers whether for Children affected by conflict or any other Child as they are ill prepared not only for the training, but also to use this training on living School. Vocational education in Northern Uganda faces the challenge of addressing the needs of Children affected by conflict, at the same time to be of high quality. For example, considerations will have to be made on providing starter packs/ kits for graduates of these institutions as most of them are already too poor to afford them in the first place.

More than 1.5 million people are currently living in IDP camps and dependent on relief for basics of life especially food, water and medication. Issues to do with education, although critical, therefore come second. The case is worse for the girls: with very poor possibilities of accessing skills training at vocational institutes, most of whom shun away from vocational training due to the perceptions of the Community that technical education is best suited for boys. In the conflict areas, the cultural bias against education for the girl Child has become acute where teen-age pregnancy and marriage have become rampant. Educationists are concerned by the cultural attitudes of parents towards the education of the girl child .

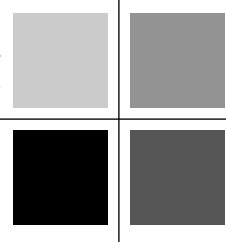
2.5 Absorption into Secondary Schools

With the liberalization of the education sector in Uganda, Secondary Schools are no longer the preserve of the Government under the Ministry of Education. Instead, several Private Secondary Schools have sprung up, largely to meet the increasing demands for Secondary education by graduates of Universal Primary Education. This in itself is a positive indicator of growth in the education sector, if only the quality of education is improved and the special consideration is given to Children in difficult circumstances. To the contrary, the private institutions are largely driven by profit motives, which in the end leads to provision of substandard quality education, congestion and general facilities. While Government aided secondary schools remain better equipped, more facilitated and staffed.

In Northern Uganda, the effect of the conflict on Secondary Education has been worse on children in rural and private institutions. Schools have been displaced from whole counties and either amalgamated with others in dilapidated structures, or their operation suspended altogether. In Gulu

9 Interview with the Headmistress, Y.Y. Memorial College 22nd Sept. 2005.

10 Interview with the Acting Haeadmaster, Janan Luwum memorial college, 21st September 2005



district, Coch Goma Secondary School is hosted in the premises of Gulu High School, while in Kitgum district, Janan Luwum Memorial College has been displaced and is currently hosted by Y.Y. Okot memorial School. The amalgamation of the Secondary Schools has led to congestion in few Government aided Schools in the urban centers, far beyond their planned capacities. This also means that the facilities that were meant for a few students are constrained to accommodate far more students and therefore, resulting into poor quality education as it becomes difficult for teachers to meet the needs attend to all students. As acknowledged by the respondents, it is difficult to control students in Schools amalgamated and therefore indiscipline is very high among them.

2.5.0 Inadequate data on Enrollment and Retention

To trace the rates of enrolment of students and retention rates requires adequate desegregated statistical data on all the categories of students is regularly updated. It is such data that informs planning for the various institutions of learning at all levels. Statistics on enrolment of students into Secondary School could only be found at the secondary Schools and no effort has been made to desegregate it with that on Primary School leavers. This makes it difficult to determine the transition rates of Students in conflict-affected areas, due to a number of reasons. Secondary education, unlike Primary education is not wholly decentralized, and District Education officials seem to be quietly paying disproportionate attention to the well-funded Universal Primary education, than on secondary education. There is also yet no system of desegregating information from the Ministry of Education to the Districts and the Schools themselves.

2.5.1 Enrollment

Generally, there is high rate of enrollment from P. 7 to senior one in the few schools concentrated in urban centers of conflict-affected North compared to other regions nationally. Some schools have had to double their capacities in terms of enrollment despite the limited facilities and manpower. Schools visited cited a sizeable number of P. 7 students missing out on admission on account of capacities of schools to accommodate larger numbers. It must also be noted that majority of students in war-affected districts fail to access education from outside the region either because of poor performances that can not compete with better results from those regions or because of the higher fee-levy from outside the region. Majority of P.7 leavers are therefore not enjoying secondary education.

2.5.2. Retention

The poor situation of education in war affected northern Uganda worsens by the poor rate of retention at secondary level. Records from secondary schools surveyed revealed generous levels of enrollment in Senior one but this decline as they children progresses to higher classes. On average, schools have recorded a dropout rate of up to 25% in war-affected areas as compared to less than 5% for non-conflict affected districts. In some schools the number of students was drastically cut down because of the war either through abduction in some schools, relocation to safer schools as well as complete dropout for fear of abduction, poverty, or pregnancy in the case of girls.

Table showing dropout rates of Selected Schools in Conflict affected districts

Name of School	Total No. of Students	Annual Dropout	Percentage
Gulu High School	1,029	256	25%
Oxford College- Kitgum	270	52	19%
Kitgum Comprehensive College	1,017	120	11%
Kitgum Progressive College	176	25	14%
Patongo Secondary School	483	13	3%
Lira Palwo S.S.	214	32	15%
Otwal Secondary School- Apac	302	29	10%

The reasons for poor retention rates in Secondary School education are varied but are all mutually reinforcing. The following deserve mention:

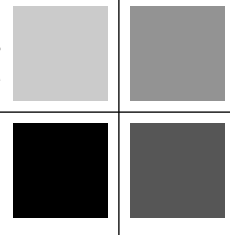
The leading cause of the high drop out rates among students affected by conflict is poverty which makes education such a costly venture for the parents who no longer earn regular income. This has been illustrated in different ways; a head teacher noted that while in the past parents paid Schools in at least two installments, during the conflict period, parents are paying School fees in bits of about ten installments. The students have also learnt coping mechanisms moving from one school to the other as a means of avoiding School fees. *“I have uniforms of three Secondary Schools, when I am sent home from one of them; I go to the others... where do they expect me to get money. I also want to be in School.”* The conflict has robbed the community of meaningful economic activity necessary to support education of Children.

This study also discovered that there was still too much stigma attached to formerly abducted Children by both their teachers and their peer students making it difficult for them to fit in the formal learning environment. With apparent knowledge gaps of these categories of students, the sort of finger pointing, name calling and bullying result in drop out of these students. Schools with these categories of Children face the challenge of whether to support these students so that they can cope with the learning environment which is a better way of integrating them into the broader community or to establish exclusive learning facilities for them.

Although on a downward spiral, insecurity has contributed significantly to the drop out of students. That Schools in Northern Uganda have been vulnerable to attacks and abduction of their students is perhaps to say the obvious. For fear of abduction, it is not uncommon to find students opting to leave schooling altogether and engaging in other activities, including joining the Local Defence Units (LDUs), an auxiliary to the national army.

With different socio economic and security challenges to contend with in the conflict areas, it becomes difficult for the students to concentrate in their academic pursuit. Students with exceptionally good performance in conflict areas deserve the respect of everyone. However, for the majority, obtaining the minimum grades to pass is what they settle for after having to balance

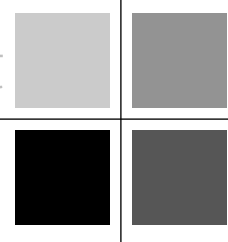
11 Remarks by a student interviewed in Gulu.



household concerns and their academic pursuit. When such balancing becomes difficult to do, they consider dropping out of School as a viable opportunity cost for them. During the interviews one of the Head teachers expressed that; it is unreasonable to expect older siblings to be in School when they have to look after the younger ones.

In almost every School sampled, the highest dropout rates are among girls. Rather than look at the overall rates, it is important to recognize the gender dimension it has taken in conflict areas. Pregnancy and early and quite often forced marriage are the leading causes of dropout among the girls. This in itself is a factor of the congestion in IDP camps, poverty and breakdown of the traditional social order as a result of conflict. Recognizing that fewer girls make it to Schools than boys, interventions to address the dropout will need to be not only gender sensitive, but fully apply the principles of affirmative action. Unconventional methods of responding to the education needs of Child mothers, child headed families will need to be explored.





3.0. Interventions in providing education for children affected by conflict

Children studying in areas not affected by conflict still go through the very social and academic challenges that any student would face. Many of them are already orphaned in need of Scholarships or bursaries. However, these challenges are by far lower than what is face by Children affected by conflict. Interestingly, opportunities opened to Children in non-conflict areas are the very opportunities that are available to children in conflict areas as if not to appreciate the extent of the damage that the conflict has caused. It is important to note from the outset that despite the gravity of the problem, different stakeholders are making contributions to solving the problem albeit at varying degrees. It is therefore only necessary to make an analysis of these interventions to guide future planning by the various stakeholders.

3.1 Bursary Schemes under the Ministry of Education

It has been a tradition of the Ministry of Education to provide bursaries to two best performing disadvantaged students selected from every sub county in Uganda covering an annual amount of 270,000 Uganda Shillings in school fees. In essence, the criteria used for the selection of students in the districts of Kampala, Wakiso, Masaka and Mbarara, is the same as in the district affected by conflict or other disadvantaged areas. While this bursary scheme is important contribution to the education of disadvantaged Children has dismal participation of the community in the assessment and selection of the beneficiaries. It is therefore a rigid scheme that cannot adequately respond to the specific and growing needs of the different communities such as those of Children affected by conflict. The amount of money released for the bursary has remained static for the last three years despite changes in the economy such as fluctuating rates of inflation and increasing numbers of Primary School leavers as illustrated by the growing enrollment in Secondary School as a result of Universal Primary Education as shown in the table below;

Enrollment in Masaka Secondary School 2001 – 2005

Year	Girls	Boys	Total no. admitted
2001	153	241	394
2002	166	219	385
2003	194	226	420
2004	203	261	464
2005	123	195	318 (on going)

With the increasing number of students enrolling in Secondary School, it is unrealistic for the Government to maintain the bursaries at a fixed amount and to a limited number of students. The increasing number of Children enrolled in Secondary Schools is also prominent in urban areas.

However, what has often been ignored in the analysis of this growth is the level of drop out of students who join Secondary school. Even in non-conflict affected areas a significant number of students dropout for various reasons, although the acuteness of the problem does not match that of schools in conflict affected areas. In Lubiri Secondary School for example the dropout rate averages at about 40 students between admission into Secondary School and sitting for O’level examinations. This tends to have a negative impact especially on the few girls who make it to Secondary School due to the negative attitudes that the parents and community have on the education of girls .

Table showing retention in Lubiri Secondary School

Year	Female	Male	Total	O-level sitting
2001	128	162	290	216
2002	135	182	319	286
2003	141	230	371	293
2004	104	181	285	268
2005	111	220	331	---

3.2 Scholarships and Bursaries

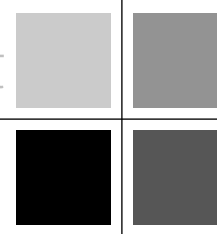
As an intervention to help students affected by conflict to access secondary education, different organizations have put in place bursary schemes with varying degrees of success. Some of the bursary schemes are available to students nationally while most of them are particularly targeting Children affected by conflict. These schemes also tended to vary from one district to another and from one secondary School to another.

Table Showing Bursary Schemes in Gulu District

Bursary Scheme	Beneficiaries	Eligibility criteria	Amount per student per term
IDP Bursary	46	IDP children/ needy	47,000=
Gulu District	15	Needy orphans	70,000=
MOE Scholarship Program	10	Orphans/ needy	90,000=
NGO Bursaries	3,000	Depends on Organization	Discretionary
Acholi Education Initiative	33	Formally abducted children	All fees

As far as bursaries for Children affected by conflict are concerned, it was established that there are a number of schemes already in place to help them. From the schools surveyed, it was found out that a total of 3,104 children benefit from the bursaries and scholarships in Gulu district. This sounds a significant number especially for one district.

An area of concern in the administration of the bursary schemes is the variance in the amounts offered to students in the different Schools. As noted earlier each scheme tends to have its own eligibility criteria and the amount of money that is given to the students. For example the Central



Government bursary for IDP Children allocates 47,000 shillings for each student. Apart from this amount not being inadequate to pay School fees per term in most Secondary Schools in the districts, it is never released in time. By the time this study was conducted, only 8,000 shillings out of the 47,000 shillings allocated had been released to the Schools so far. On the other hand, some Non Governmental Organizations like World Vision provide tuition fees and even scholastic materials to their beneficiaries. It is therefore, worth noting that whereas the number of students benefiting from the different schemes is high, the inconsistencies in the administration of the schemes distort the very purpose for which they were established. This problem is clearly observed in Gulu High School.

Table showing different Bursary Schemes in Gulu High School

Sponsor	Eligibility criteria	Amount Per term	Administration
World Vision	All Orphans	119,000/child	World Vision
ARLPI	Formerly Abducted Children	119,000/child	ARLPI
Dyeretek Bursary	Orphans due to HIV / AIDS	119,000/child	Dyeretek
Central Government	Children in IDP camps	47,000/child	District
Gulu district Bursary scheme	Merit – best 10	119,000/child	District

As reminiscent of the entire process, in Gulu High School has different Schemes for Children affected by conflict. The schemes administered by the District and the NGOs base their rates on the bursaries on the School fees charged by the different Schools, which is 119,000 shillings for Gulu High School. The IDP scheme administered by the Central Government is however, based on a flat rate of 47,000 shillings, an amount which not even half the termly School fees. In the final term of 2004, only 7,500 shillings per student was release to the School. The respondent postulated that as political campaigns draw nearer; the scheme would be made a political issue and may be fully implemented nearing the campaigns.

3.3 Bursary Schemes in Kitgum District

The actual number of bursaries given out in Kitgum district was difficult to ascertain especially when different agencies have their own criteria of selecting beneficiaries. However, this study documented a total of 1,039 students benefiting from bursaries mostly provided by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with the Central Government scheme accounting for only 21 students. The IDP bursary Scheme started by the Central Government in 2004 had 350 students benefiting from it by September 2005; only 8,000 shillings per student had been released to the Schools. Most of the Government schools thus face a dilemma of whether to send the students home or wait indefinitely for the balance of the money to be paid. In Kitgum district, most bursaries are managed by the Non Governmental Organizations as illustrated in the table below.

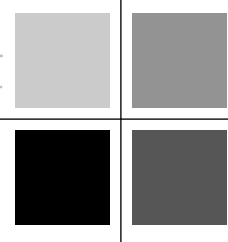
Table Showing Bursary Schemes in Kitgum District based on schools visited

Scheme	Beneficiaries	Eligibility criteria	Amount
AVSI	82	Orphans/ needy	All fees
IRC	70	Orphans/ needy	All fees
COU diocese	38	Orphans	All fees
CPA	17	Orphans	All fees
World Vision	67	Orphans	Part fees + scholastic materials
KICWA	2	Orphans	All fees
CCF	30	Orphans	Fees+ Scholastic materials
MOE	21	Merit	Fees
MOE-IDP Scheme	350	Children in IDP camps	Part fees*
Meeting Point	42	HIV affected	All fees + psychosocial support
AEI	160	Formerly abducted	Fees, transport, psychosocial
FAWE	9	Performance	Fees and Pocket money
ARLPI	138	Formerly abducted	All fees
FHI	08	Not known	All fees
Ibaraka	05	Not known	All fees

As in Gulu district, to have 1,039 students benefiting from bursaries is numerically impressive. However, it is probably a drop in the ocean given the magnitude of the problem people affected by conflict have to contend with. A comparative analysis of the category of beneficiaries in Kitgum and Kampala districts reveals where the need for bursaries lies most. In Kampala most Bursaries are given on the basis of excellence, special talents and needy students and a few orphans. In Kitgum district, the majority of the students benefiting from the different bursaries are associated with the conflict. They are predominantly orphans, formally abducted Children, Children displaced from their homes with very few based on merit. One of the severe effects of this war on the population in Northern Uganda has been the distortion it caused to the earning capacities of the ordinary people. The fact is that far more students need bursaries than are currently benefiting from all the schemes. For so many students to be dependent on bursaries and scholarships shows that the problem is a bigger one.

In Y.Y. Okot memorial School, the number of students on bursaries is about 30% of the entire student population in the School. This proportion rises to 70% if the redundant IDP bursaries are considered. One may be tempted to argue that the School is well facilitated and that all is well. Contrary to this, it simply shows that the demand for bursaries is too overwhelming that almost all students are illegible.

* The IDP scheme has never fully taken off; only 8,000 shillings has been released



4.0 Weaknesses of existing interventions

The approaches to the alleviation of the problems of education for Children affected by conflict in Northern Uganda has been varied and in some instances have created more problems than the one they are attempting to solve.

4.1 Lack of Coordination

With different State and non-State actors contributing to the education of Children affected by conflict, each agency has its own eligibility criteria, the type of bursary to pay (financial or material) and other conditions attached. Some NGOs for example only pay half the fees and then go on to provide Scholastic materials, while others pay all the School fees and provide transport and scholastic materials. On the Government side two schemes exist for bursaries; first the Scheme by Ministry of Education which covers two students per Sub County. The second bursary Scheme, specifically targeting Internally Displaced Children has been largely ineffective where only 8,000 shillings of the 47,000 planned had so far been released by the time this study was conducted. The administration of this scheme reveals that it was probably not well thought through in the planning process. All the disjointed schemes and efforts of the different stakeholders in providing education for Children affected by conflict do not address the education needs of all students in conflict who need help most.

4.2 Duplication

Arising from the lack of coordination in the bursary Schemes, the study also found out that in all the Schools that were surveyed, there was at least one incidence of a student concurrently more than one bursary schemes. On the other hand, there were students in the same Schools who had dropped out of the same Schools due to lack of School fees, or many former LRA captives who have applied for Scholarships . It was also established that many students use the multiple scholarships as a mechanism of diversifying against losing out on one. Head teachers almost in unison echoed that in such cases they advise students to choose the most lucrative or stable scheme. Such response is good although remedial. It does not answer the question of efficiency of the Schemes and the wastage that may arise out of the duplication.

4.3 Limited Monitoring of existing Schemes

Provision of Scholarships to children affected by conflict gives a lifetime opportunity for children whose hopes of a descent life in the future have been riddled by conflict. It thus requires that the administration of the bursaries be monitored to ensure that it fulfils the purpose of providing education to the disadvantaged Children. Monitoring of progress is not limited to assessing whether the School fee was paid or not. It involves tracking the period academic progress of the beneficiaries as well as offering psychosocial support to them. Acholi Education Initiative and Meeting Point are organizations that have excelled in regular monitoring and psychosocial

support to the students that they support. All students sponsored by Meeting Point have mentors attached to them who visit and talk to them regularly. Other than these, most students' sponsors are not committed to monitoring the progress of their beneficiaries. It was also found out that the involvement of parents and the local community leaders in the management of the bursaries is minimal. School authorities also need to be involved more in the selection processes to ensure that the most deserving students are benefiting that merely providing them with the list of students an organization proposes to sponsor.

4.4 Unreliable Bursary Schemes

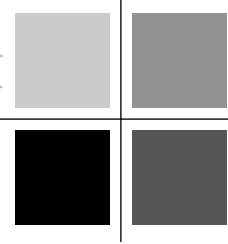
A reliable source of bursary or scholarship offers assurances to the beneficiaries of completing secondary school. On the other hand, scholarships with uncertain or short termination dates cause anxiety to the beneficiaries who depend on them for their education. While most of the Scholarships and bursaries last for at least four years of Secondary education, some organizations only pay fees for one year. Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative bursary relied heavily on private donations from family and friends of the founder, a catholic priest. Following his death at the beginning of the year, ARLPI stopped funding the students in first term and has requested Acholi Education Initiative to take them up. All these do not provide a stable learning environment for Children affected by conflict in Northern Uganda. There is need for a more consolidated Policy for providing bursaries or Scholarships to Children affected by conflict.

4.5 Minimal Central Government involvement

The role of the central Government in providing bursaries and scholarships for Children disadvantaged by conflict has been marginal in both Kitgum and Gulu districts. The two bursary schemes of the central Government do not respond adequately to the needs of Children affected by conflict. First, the Ministry of Education Bursary that is available to all districts in the Country conservatively limits the number of students to 2 per Sub County, and the amount to 270,000 Shillings per student. The Scheme in itself is a very important for education of disadvantaged Children in Uganda. However, the Scheme has no mechanism of responding to the challenges of education arising from dynamic events such as the conflict in Northern Uganda. In 2004, the Government through the Ministry of Education started the IDP scheme to support secondary education of displaced students living in camps in Northern Uganda. The principle behind the establishment of this scheme deserves to be lauded as it resonates with the dire conditions prevailing in the IDP camps. In practice however, the Scheme is ineffective in achieving its objectives. Under this scheme students living in IDP camps would benefit from a flat rate of forty seven thousand (47,000) shillings for their termly School fees. This flat rate of 47,000 shillings is not sufficient to meet school fees for most Secondary Schools in the areas affected by conflict. Since the inception of this scheme, the Ministry of Education had released only 8,000 shillings per student with no reason assigned. In essence the two scholarship schemes of the central Government have not made much difference to secondary education for Children affected by conflict.

¹⁴ AVSI is among such organizations.

¹⁵ Interview with Programme Officer, ARLPI Kitgum Office on 22nd September 2005



5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

It is very clear from the survey findings that in the 19 years of conflict, secondary education for the entire region has been distorted. Yet secondary education is a vital level of education associated with skills building and job creation. Whereas it was difficult to establish the transitional rates from primary to secondary school due to methodological difficulties, the dropout rates of secondary school students is startling. The interventions adopted by different stakeholders in form of bursaries, career guidance and psychosocial support are commendable. The NGOs have committed a lot of time and resources to the education of the Children affected by conflict. It should also be noted on the other hand that with the exception of the IDP Scheme, all other schemes are available nationally to all children and not just restricted to children affected by conflict. As noted earlier, the IDP scheme has been pitied for its inadequate and irregular support to the students. Yet, with the contribution from all these parties, even there is a huge gap to be filled in the provision of education to the children affected by conflict.

5.2 Recommendations for Action

a. The biggest challenge that compounds all other challenges to the education of Children affected by conflict is the insecurity itself. It is insecurity that leads to abduction, displacement, poverty and breakdown of morality which, all together result into difficulty in accessing education and dropout of those in School. In the very order, the education of children in the conflict affected areas of Northern and North Eastern Uganda can only be revamped when peace and security prevail in the region. It therefore calls for all forces to lobby for a peaceful resolution of the conflict so that the Children can enjoy education as a right and not perceive it as a privilege for a few.

b. The Government should provide complete and free Secondary education for all the Children affected by conflict given that they represent not only a group of vulnerable people but also that they are at risk of missing out of formal education for ever. Putting in place a Policy that gives free secondary education would be the surest way of bridging the gap between the conflict affected areas and other parts of the Country and the priority for these children should be reflected in the UPPET policy.

c. Whereas the contribution of the different stakeholders to the education of children affected by conflict is commendable, it is not without fault. The sheer lack of coordination between the different agencies is rather disgraceful especially when it results into duplication and inefficiency with bursary awards going to those least deserving. UCRNN recommends that Non Governmental Organisations providing bursaries should seek the active participation and assistance of the Local community leaders or the School administration in their selection process. These bursaries should be strengthened and focused to target complimenting government UPE and UPPET.

d. With the high incidence of abductions and displacement of Children, the dropout rate of students in most Secondary Schools in the region is rather high. Some of the students who drop out cannot comfortably study in a formal Secondary School anylonger due to their age. These group of students should not be abandoned to wander looking for education and jobs. Government must speed up is enactment of the the Costed educational Policy framework for the disadvantaged Children. This is particularly useful to the formally abducted Children whose aspirations of a systematic education have been shartered by a war not of their wish.

e. The physical destruction done to the education infrastructure and other facilities will require time and commitment to bring them to the level they previously held. While appreciating the work of GOU in reconstructing the Northern region through the Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Project and now the, Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, a lot more remains to be done. Other than having disjointed programmes on the reconstruction of Northern Uganda, the Government should adopt a consolidated and logical approach to reconstruction of war torn Northern Uganda. As for education, most Schools have run down physical structures and private schools struggling to remain in business, lacking in scholastic materials, library and laboratories with others having appalling sanitary conditions. The Government needs to aid struggling schools both Private and Government so that they can benefit the children affected by conflict.

f. The community needs to come up and play an important role in the education of their Children after years of waste. Instead of resigning to fate, the community should mobilize resources for the education of their children. The example of Acholi Education Initiative in providing education to the Children affected by conflict offers some ray of hope that the people can emulate. In particular the community needs to desist from the tendency of giving out girls early in marriage but must be encouraged to promote equal access to education by all people.

g. While appreciating the efforts of different stakeholders in providing scholarships for Children affected by conflict, provision of bursaries in itself does not complete the process. The school facilities in the war tone districts are dilapidated with many in need of rehabilitation. In order to provide quality education to Children affected by conflict, facilities like libraries, laboratories and physical structures should be improved. Private schools that are operating in the region with very difficult conditions should be supported by the Government especially in accessing scholastic materials and a fund for putting up structures.

h. The study also found out acute shortage of data in the districts. It is analysis of existing that that informs planning processes and Policy interventions. Although different schools endeavour to keep data on performance and progress of students at the different levels of education, the study discovered that no attempt was made to desegregate such data at the district levels. Government must improve the information management system in the districts so as to monitor the progress of each student in the districts.

