NGO Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda: Interrogating Liberal Peace from the Ground

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Abstract

The question of what agenda drives NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict setting has been raised in a number of literatures which make generalized conclusions that NGOs tend to respond to the liberal peace agenda, and in the process co-opt local peacebuilding initiatives. Liberal peace agenda refers to the post-conflict peacebuilding approach based on the promotion of democracy, economic liberalization, human rights and the rule of law. As such, NGOs are seen as privatizing peacebuilding, marginalizing local initiatives and applying unsustainable approaches to peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts.

Provoked by these assertions, I conducted field research in northern Uganda, which up to 2006 had experienced 22 years of conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Uganda (GOU). I contend in my findings that while to some extent the generalized observations made by liberal peace critics are true, they fail to fully engage with the micro aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding. The macro-analytic assertions of the liberal peace critics ignore the plurality of the NGO peacebuilding practice, the diverse internal organizational culture, and the complexities and diversities of the contextual dynamics of post-conflict settings.

My research was based on a micro level analysis and demonstrated that the peacebuilding process in northern Uganda was interactive, and, as such, engendered diverse encounters of sense-making, relationship building and co-construction of peacebuilding discourse and practice between NGOs, donors and local community. The study shows that peacebuilding was essentially *relational* and developed through a process of relational constructionism, which denotes social processes of reality construction based on relational encounters.

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List of Abbreviations

ADF Allied Democratic Forces

AI Amnesty International

ARLPI Acholi Religious Leaders for Peace

CAMP Citizens' Army for Multi-party Politics

CAR Central African Republic

CBOs community based organizations

CHMT Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team

CNDLS Centre for New Design in Learning and Scholarship

CoP communities of practice

CRPs community resource persons

CRS Catholic Relief Services

CRS Catholic Relief Services

DAC Development Assistance Committee

DDR demobilization, demilitarization and integration

DP Democratic Party

DRC Democratic Republic of Congo

DRTs Demobilization and Resettlement Teams

ESO External Security Organization

FEDEMU Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda

FOBA Force Obote Back Again

FRONASA Front for National Salvation

FUNA Former Uganda National Army

FUNA Former Uganda National Army

GANAL Gulu Archdiocese-Nebbi Diocese-Arua Diocese-Lira Diocese. Also means Grow All New Alive in Love

GOU Government of Uganda

HRW Human Rights Watch

HSM Holy Spirit Movement

ICC International Criminal Court

IDPs internally displaced persons

IFS International Financial Institutions

IGA income generating activities

IMM Implementation and Management Mechanisms

INEE Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies

ISO Internal Security Organization

JLG Joint Liaison Group

JRP Justice and Reconciliation Project

KY Kabaka Yekka

LFA log-frame approach

LRA Lord's Resistance Army

MCC Mennonite Central Committee

MDG Millennium Development Goals

NALU National Army for Liberation of Uganda

NCC National Consultative Council

NGO non-governmental organization

NOM Ninth October Movement

NRC Norwegian Refugee Council

NRM National Resistance Movement

OTP Office of the Prosecutor

PCIA peace and conflict impact assessment

PRA People's Redemption Army

PRA Popular Revolutionary Army

PRDP Peace, Recovery and Development Plan

PSWs problem solving workshops

SPLA Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement

TPDF Tanzanian People's Defence Forces

UCC Uganda Constitutional Commission

UDCM/A United Democratic Christian Movement /Army

UFM Uganda Freedom Movement

UHRC Uganda Human Rights Commission

UHSA United Holy Salvation Army

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UNLA Uganda National Liberation Army

UNLF/A Uganda National Liberation Front / Army

UNOCHA United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNRF Uganda National Rescue Front

UNRF Uganda National Rescue Front

UPC Uganda People's Congress

UPDA/M Uganda People's Democratic Army/Movement

UPDF Uganda People's Democratic Force

UPM Uganda Patriotic Movement

WNBF West Nile Bank Front

Chapter One: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This study is motivated by the quest to fill the gap in knowledge of the interactive processes between NGO peacebuilding, local reality, and external influences on peacebuilding practices in post-conflict settings. The research examines the relationship between NGOs, donors and local community in peacebuilding, and the ensuing tensions between external liberal peace influences and local peacebuilding approaches in northern Uganda. This study was mainly prompted by my past experiences of conducting peacebuilding activities in collaboration with NGOs and academic institutions in post-conflict settings in Africa. My peacebuilding work entailed carrying out workshops, academic classes, seminars, mediation and reconciliation training.

One of the major challenges that I faced in the course of my work was determining the extent to which these peacebuilding interventions were relevant, sustainable and consistent with the local needs and approaches to peacebuilding. In most cases, the peacebuilding interventions were limited by lack of sufficient funding and qualified personnel, as well as tensions between programme objectives and local needs. These tensions also played a role in the relationship between donor agencies and NGOs on the ground.

The question of what agenda drives NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict settings has been raised by several authors who make generalized conclusions that

NGO peacebuilding is externally influence and tends to respond to the liberal peace agenda, and in the process co-opt the local peacebuilding initiatives to the same agenda. Liberal peace critics assert that liberal peace is based on a western political agenda that propagates democracy, economic liberalization, human rights and the rule of law (Mac Ginty, 2010; Newman, 2009; Richmond, 2008; Richmond, 2010b). The critics further claim that liberal peace agenda has privatized peacebuilding, marginalized local initiatives and rendered peacebuilding activities unsustainable.

Hence, provoked by the above assertions of liberal peace critics, and my own peacebuilding experience, I conducted field research on NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda while guided by this principle research question: *To what extent is the NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda informed by the local reality and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding?* I sought to understand the processes of peacebuilding on the ground and whether NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict settings was simply a western agenda, as claimed by the liberal peace critics, or there were other factors impacting peacebuilding that needed to be taken into account.

Northern Uganda experienced 22 years of conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Uganda (GOU). This context had both liberal peace characteristics and specific conflict dynamics that were particular to northern Uganda. The conflict was part of a continuum of different conflicts that Uganda had experienced over many years. The conflict was also highly militarized and the Government of Uganda was often funded by western nations to fight the LRA who were perceived as a terrorist group with a potential

to destabilize the region (Allen, 2006:74; Finnström, 2008:112). The western financial and political support fell under the categorization of the liberal peace agenda. Such included financial and military support to fight the LRA as a 'terrorist' group, hence extending the western nations' 'War on Terror' agenda; institutionalization and liberalization processes through constitutional review, democratic elections, promotion of human rights and liberalization of economy. Another liberal peace characterization was the fact that western nations supported the International Criminal Court's (ICC) indictment of the LRA leaders in 2005. The ICC intervention opened up debate on retributive and restorative justice; internal and external mechanisms of conflict intervention; the role of western nations on Uganda conflict; and repercussions on the peace negotiations between the LRA and GOU. Another characteristic of the northern Uganda conflict was that it had diverse peacebuilding agents: NGOs, both local and international; cultural leaders; government officials; religious groups and their leaders; and the general community. There were also intricate layers of conflict which highlighted the complexity of the protracted nature of conflict.

I noted that the critique of liberal peace mainly focused on post-conflict settings which had heavy military machinery and were characterized by the political agenda of institutional, social and political reforms in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, East Timor, etc. The analysis made generalized critique of NGO peacebuilding in reference to post-conflict contexts without much acknowledgement of respective contextual and historical diversities. The liberal peace critics thus, situated their critiques on the macro perspectives and ignored the micro aspects of contextual analysis.

As I have noted above, I was prompted to question these assertions by researching the microcosm of NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. I conducted field research for a period of six months. My research sample comprised of 49 respondents (see Table 1a below) from local and international NGOs, funding agencies, government institutions of peacebuilding, local government officials, cultural leaders, and community members. This was in addition to 19 informal interviews (see Table 1b below). I used both individual and focus group interviews, observations and the study of secondary material. These interviews were semi-structured. I wanted to find out how different peacebuilding agents, at the NGO, donor and local community levels, interacted with each other in constructing a peacebuilding discourse and practice, and how the tensions between the local and external liberal peace approaches to peacebuilding contributed to this process.

To decipher the interactive processes in peacebuilding, I applied relational constructionism as a theoretical framework. Analysis of participants' perceptions on peacebuilding activities showed that peacebuilding processes were essentially *relational* and, as such, engendered diverse encounters of interactive sense-making, relationship building, networking, relational social capital and co-construction of peacebuilding discourse and practice. 'Relational' characteristics denote *relational constructionism*, which entails social processes of reality construction based on relational encounters (Bouwen, 2010). 'Relational' aspects of peacebuilding are central to sense-making processes and co-construction of a desired future (Hosking and McNamee, 2006, Hosking, 2010b, Bouwen, 2010, Lederach, 2003). I will elaborate in more detail the concept of relational constructionism in Chapter Three.

NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda was a continuous process of relational constructionism. Hence, within the diverse relationships, interactions, joint practices, relational tensions and encounters between NGOs, communities and donor agencies, there were constant constructions of new meanings, perspectives, practices, aspirations, tensions, frustrations and social inquiries that contributed to the peacebuilding discourse and practice. These interactions enriched the peacebuilding approaches in the post-conflict setting of northern Uganda. What was important was therefore not the question of who, between the NGOs, donors and local community held the upper hand, but rather the discovery of the *processes of peacebuilding discourse and practices that emerged from* mutual and diverse encounters.

The findings of the study demonstrate that while to some extent the generalized observations made by the liberal peace critics are true, they fail to fully engage with the micro aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding. The macro-analytic assertions of the liberal peace critics ignore the plurality of the NGO peacebuilding practice, the diverse internal organizational culture, values, policies, leadership agencies, as well as the complexities and diversities of the contextual dynamics of post-conflict settings. Besides, the liberal peace literature is often based on theoretical abstractions of observable anecdotal evidence rather than in-depth empirical research.

The experiences of the local community have often been described as being parallel to the liberal peace agenda. Liberal peace critics assert that the *local* (meaning the local community) has been romanticized as weak, lacking in

capacity, and homogeneous (Richmond, 2007). The *local* has also been perceived as pristine and better placed to understand the complexities on the ground and subsequently, develop better solutions (Mac Ginty, 2010). From a different perspective, the *local* has been seen as co-opting the liberal peace agenda and derailing the objectives of the latter (Mac Ginty, 2010, Franks and Richmond, 2008). These perspectives have resulted in a dichotomy between the local community and external interventions in post-conflict settings. The liberal peace approach also ignores the fact that there exists within the local settings a plurality of peace discourses and capacities for conflict transformation. My research findings, as I shall demonstrate in Chapters Five and Six, reveal that different levels of NGO interaction with the local communities engendered new perspectives in peacebuilding that had not been explored by either the critics or the exponents of liberal peace.

In this process of the relational construction of the social reality of peace, NGOs, donors and local community influenced the narratives of peace within the framework of their interactions, hence impacting the peacebuilding discourse and practice. Further, the existence of these various dimensions of interaction between the NGOs (in relation with the donors), institutional leadership and local community was a clear indication that NGOs were perceived by the local people as active agents of change. While there were international and local NGOs, the interactive dynamics between them characterized by shared activities, funding and collaborative initiatives meant that the differences between them were rather minimal. Besides, nearly all of the NGO staff interviewed were originally from northern Uganda, and thus had a closer affinity to the context with a better understanding of the conflict dynamics. This

observation does not of course overlook some of the external influences to NGO peacebuilding. Rather it brings in a new dimension (layers of identities amongst NGO staff) that bridges the dichotomization of NGOs and local community into a relational constructionism in peacebuilding. I will explain this in detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Richmond (2009a) and Mac Ginty (2010) propose a hybrid approach that takes both the local and liberal peace perspectives into account. While this makes sense, it is not, according to my findings, a practical solution. Peacebuilding can be designed with a clear structure of implementation, but it cannot be made to happen within a peace design. Such a conceptualization ignores the social construction of meaning that develops when different agents of peacebuilding interact. The concern in my research was not how the NGO peacebuilding and local community can meet in the middle through a hybrid system, but how their interaction produces new processes of social change at different levels of peacebuilding discourse and practice.

The research findings, as explained in Chapters Five and Six, show that opinions were divided on the extent to which the ICC intervention impacted the peace negotiations between the LRA and GOU; and the implications of the tension between retributive justice based on the ICC legal mechanism against impunity, and the restorative justice founded on culturally-based mechanisms of forgiveness and reconciliation.

This study makes a significant contribution to the practice of peacebuilding in post-conflict and low intensity conflicts, and the discourse on the analysis of the

validity of the arguments of the liberal peace critiques in relation to NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. There is limited (or no) literature on northern Uganda that has this focus. The existing literature offers a general description of the historical background of the various conflicts that Uganda has known, impacts on the populations, peace processes and socio-political challenges (Kabwegyere, 1972, Mamdani, 1984, Atkinson, 1994, Behrend, 1998, Kasozi et al., 1994, Amone-P'Olak, 2007). The study thus makes a contribution to the Uganda literature on peacebuilding, which is very limited.

The theoretical framework of relational constructionism that I have used is relatively new. This research will therefore make a contribution to the development of this concept particularly in understanding the diverse processes of peacebuilding and the interaction between peacebuilding agents.

The study also furthers the debate on the current literature on NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts. There is still limited literature analyzing NGO theoretical and practical approaches to peacebuilding in relation to the post-conflict dynamics, and the extent to which such peacebuilding interventions are informed by the local reality and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding.

This study makes an analysis of culturally-based mechanisms of peacebuilding, and the extent to which they contribute to peacebuilding interventions. Whereas most literature has given a positive appraisal to the culturally-based

mechanisms of reconciliation in northern Uganda (Acirokop, 2010; Oketch, 2008; Afako, 2002; Collaborative Transitions Africa, 2009), my findings reveal that these mechanisms are not as commonly practised as purported by this body of literature. This is a significant finding and one that contributes to the larger debate on the role of culturally-based mechanisms of reconciliation in post-conflict reconstruction.

The broader ambition of this research was to develop an in-depth understanding of post-conflict peacebuilding practices in northern Uganda, and their relevance in comprehending post-conflict situations. The findings cannot be generalized, but they however contribute to a better understanding of the interaction between the NGOs, donors and local participants as active agents in processes of peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. Both of these agents contribute to the relational construction of the discourse and practice of peacebuilding.

Research Location: Northern Uganda

Uganda is located in East Africa and is bordered by Kenya to the east, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the west, Sudan to the north, Tanzania to the south and Rwanda to the southwest. As I shall elaborate in Chapter Four, northern Uganda has known many conflicts over the years. The most protracted of these has been the 22 year conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Uganda (GOU) that has cost close to 300,000 lives; led to mass abduction of an estimated 60,000 children; and increased poverty and insecurity in the region (Kisekka-Ntale, 2007:422). More than 1.5 million people were displaced, most of whom had to live in internally displaced camps

for more than 20 years under very poor conditions (Mwenda, 2010:55). The LRA seeks to overthrow the government and institute a system of governance based on the Biblical Ten Commandments (Oola, 2008:67).

There have been several peace negotiation attempts, with the most recent peace talks in 2006 leading to relative peace but achieving minimum results, hence rendering the situation unpredictable (Oola, 2008:68). Despite the progress made in the LRA-GOU negotiations, the agreement was never signed by the LRA and the Government of Uganda (GOU) (Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Population, 2007:16, Lucima, 2002). The LRA has spread from Uganda into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Central African Republic (CAR) (Rice, 2010). The local people are still afraid that the LRA could still return to disturb the current peace.

In recent years large numbers of people have returned to their villages further posing the challenge of re-integration of the formerly abducted persons; land dispute resolution; provision of basic needs; forgiveness and reconciliation; and the use of culturally-based mechanisms of reconciliation (Amone-P'Olak, 2007; Bayne, 2007; Anderson et al., 2004; Blattman and Annan, 2010; Finnstrom, 2010). Reintegration has further been complicated by the arrest warrants issued on the LRA's leadership by the International Criminal Court Intervention (ICC), thereby provoking a debate between proponents of retributive and restorative justice, respectively (Apuuli, 2008; Branch, 2004).

The above situation has created humanitarian crises over the years leading to a large influx of NGOs. There are international NGOs such as the UN, UNICEF, Catholic Relief Services, Norwegian Refugee Council, as well as local NGOs and community based organizations (CBOs) (UNOCHA, 2010). Most of these organizations started off as humanitarian organizations and are now engaged in peace activities. As such they fall under the continuum of humanitarianism-development and peacebuilding perspectives. These NGOs have mainly concentrated their work in Gulu and Kitgum.

My interest in studying northern Uganda was influenced by its post-conflict nature; the peacebuilding engagement by NGOs, both local and international; the contextual liberal peace characteristics that I have describe above; the role of liberal peace in shaping the peacebuilding discourse and practice; and the recourse to culturally-based approaches to peacebuilding and their relation to mainstream peacebuilding.

I conducted my research in Gulu district, northern Uganda, which is one of the four districts largely inhabited by the Acholi people. The other three are Amuru, Kitgum and Pader. Gulu is 332 kilometres from Kampala, the capital city. Gulu consists of four counties; Kilak, Achwa, Omoro and Nwoya. However, in recent years Kilak and Nwoya counties have been merged to form Amuru District. According to a 2002 population census, Gulu had a population of 479,496 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002).[1] I focused my interviews in Unyama,

[1] No further census data are available.

Kanyagoga, Barabili, Fogod and Lacor villages. I chose these villages because they had a high presence of NGO peacebuilding activities. Most of them were populated with returnees who had re-settled following the signing of the ceasefire agreement between LRA and GOU in 2006.

My second location for research was in the control population of Atiak, which is 70 kilometres north of Gulu, in Kilak County, Amuru district. The reason I chose this location was mainly because of its obvious lack of NGO presence, and particularly given that it had known many conflicts over the years and experienced forced conscription into the LRA (Apuuli, 2004), like many regions in northern Uganda.

The Atiak region was rendered vulnerable by the fact that it was the main entrance and exit route for the LRA who often attacked from neighbouring South Sudan, which is just 50 kilometres away (Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), 2007a).

On April 20th 1995 the LRA massacred more than 200 people in Atiak, the largest single LRA attack (Otunnu, 1998, Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), 2007b). Atiak is the birth place of the late Vincent Otti, the second in command in the LRA and the one who was in command during the Atiak massacres (Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), 2007b). Due to this history of violence and massive displacements, Atiak has been neglected for years, and NGOs have avoided operating here for the fear of insecurity. The community

has, however, been conducting peacebuilding activities despite these many challenges.

Map of Uganda

Source: Infoplease (2010)

My interest in the control population of Atiak was to investigate the extent to which lack of NGO presence was a factor in determining community

participation in peacebuilding and the resultant peacebuilding discourse and practice. This was important in understanding the different interpretations of the diverse peacebuilding variables between Gulu (main location of the research) and Atiak (control population). Such peacebuilding variables included: individual and group motivation, community values, individual and communal commitment, theories of change, sustainability of peace programmes and community participation.

Definitions of terms

Peacebuilding

The term "peacebuilding" came to be in common use after Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then United Nations Secretary-General, pronounced his *Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Ghali, 1992) in 1992. Since then the term has been used rather ambiguously to include all activities that address post-conflict reconstruction. Boutros Ghali (1992) defined peacebuilding as "sustained, co-operative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems ..."[2] Peacebuilding also entails “action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid relapse into conflict” (Ghali, 1992: no. 27). However, the Secretary General’s explanation of the term was so broad that it included demobilization, demilitarization and reintegration (DDR), decommissioning of weapons, election monitoring, promotion of political participation, human rights protection and reconstruction of institutions of governance.[2]

[2] In the *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* peacebuilding was further expanded beyond post-conflict settings to include activities *before* (conflict prevention), *during* (conflict management) and *after* (post-conflict reconstruction) the conflict (Hanggi, 2005). Thus, peacebuilding came to

The challenge is that the term ‘peacebuilding’ in post-conflict contexts has been applied as a potpourri of all conflict intervention mechanisms further making it difficult to define its boundaries and dimensions (Paris, 1997:55; Barakat and Zyck, 2009). The ambiguities in the definition of peacebuilding are acknowledged by Paris (1997:55), who asserts that "scholars have devoted relatively little attention to analysing the concept of peace-building itself, including its underlying assumptions." Subsequently, the term ‘peacebuilding’ has remained fluid.

Among the first peace scholars to wrestle with the meaning of the term peacebuilding is Johan Galtung. He asserts that peacebuilding focuses on elimination of root causes of conflicts and promotion of dialogue, understanding, mutual trust and basic needs provision (Galtung, 1976). Thus, rather than aim at *dissociative* approach (peacekeeping) that keeps the conflicting parties apart, peacebuilding should be *associative* addressing multiple factors of conflict and bridging the differences between the parties in conflict. Galtung (1976) distinguishes between negative and positive peace: *Positive* peace entails situations where there is physical peace and fulfilment of basic needs (Galtung,

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be perceived as a proactive strategy that tackles the root causes of conflict, manages conflicts as they escalate and promotes development and democracy in countries that have not experienced conflicts. Peacebuilding has, since *Agenda for Peace,* been conceptualized and implemented within the armed conflict framework under the articulation of human security concept (Chandler, 2008b; Pauline, 2007; Cockell, 2001). HÄNGGI, H. 2005. Security Governance in Post Conflict Peacebuilding. *In:* BRYDENM, A. & HÄNGGI, H. (eds.) *Security governance in post-conflict peacebuilding.* Münster: LIT.; CHANDLER, D. 2008b. Human Security: The Dog that Didn't Back. *Security Dialogue,* 38**,** 427-438; PAULINE, E. 2007. Deepening the Human Security Debate: Beyond the Politics of Conceptual Clarification. *Politics,* 27**,** 182-189; COCKELL, J. G. 2001. Human Security and Preventive Action Strategies. *In:* NEWMAN, E. & RICHMOND., O. P. (eds.) *The United Nations and human security.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

1996). *Negative* peace refers to situations where, even though there is absence of war, conditions of marginalization, poverty, discrimination, and lack of employment and housing are rampant. It thus implies unequal opportunities to resources such as political power, education, shelter, health care, trade, etc. Such situations would perpetuate *structural violence* on the wellbeing of the population. Structural violence is a relatively new term in peace studies, and was made prominent by Galtung (1985). He defines structural violence as "harm done to human beings, as a process, working slowly as the way misery in general, and hunger in particular, erode and finally kill human beings" (1985:145).[3] Galtung (1976) further expounds that peacebuilding should entail attainment of peace through peaceful means enshrined in socio-economic development. Such processes should address the root causes of conflict in order to guarantee the sustainability of peace (Galtung, 1996:112).

Ramsbotham et al (2011:231) support this view when they assert that "peacebuilding should reflect and be a product of a negotiated discursive practice and not the outcome of a technically defined and externally imposed blueprint." Pugh (2000:2) underscores that peacebuilding, at its simplest, "can be construed as activities intended to strengthen structures and processes with the aim of preventing a return to violent conflict." Further, Barakat (2010b:262) in defining the primary task of post-conflict reconstruction holds the view that the focus should be on "restoring and developing the capacity of a nation to function and manage all aspects of its collective life." This perspective advocates for the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the state. Lederach (1997:73-75)

[3] The victims often fail to see the systematic choreography of economic, political and social structures that marginalize them. Structural violence is different from direct violence that is much more noticeable and can easily produce counteractive reactions.

proposes an integrated approach to peacebuilding that takes into account the processes of preventing, managing and ending the conflict on the one hand, and on the other, innovative initiatives that can sustain conditions for peace at grassroots, middle and top levels.

My interest lies in a definition of peacebuilding that takes into account NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. The literature above demonstrates that NGO peacebuilding can be defined as: *multi-dimensional approaches to conflict resolution that aims at restoring broken relationships, instituting just societal structures and achieving provision of basic needs.* The core of the peacebuilding initiatives is the promotion and protection of human dignity, at both localized and international levels. These actions are also linked to the ecological concerns over the care of environment and fare distribution of natural resources.

Post-conflict and Post-conflict reconstruction

The context of northern Uganda, as I shall explain in Chapter Four, is very complex. Despite the fact that no peace agreement has been signed, the region has experienced peace since 2006, hence its categorization into 'post-conflict' setting. Nevertheless, northern Uganda still borders between conflict and post-conflict, as the conflict is over, but not quite. The protracted nature of conflicts in different parts of Uganda has meant that the country has simultaneously experienced war and peace, conflict and post-conflict. Shaw and Mbabazi (2009:78) describe Uganda to be in a state of "war with peace", mainly refering to the situation of war in the North and peace in the South. However, politically

Uganda has been in a 'post-conflict' state since 1986 when the current President Museveni's government came to power. But the 'post' nature of the many pockets of conflicts has not been a reality in regions such as northern Uganda.

According to Collier et al (2008:461) "nearly half of all civil wars are due to post-conflict relapses." Hence, post-conflict societies are often faced with two main challenges: "economic recovery and reduction of the risk of a recurring conflict" (Collier et al., 2008:461). This is primarily because the post-conflict settings are frequently marked by new conflicts or unresolved historical issues, hindsight in peace agreements, new grievances from peace agreements and a myriad of many other challenges (Barakat and Zyck, 2009:1071-1072; Barakat, 2005:10-11; Collier et al., 2008; MacGinty, 2010:43-45). MacGinty (2010:45-48) highlights the blind spots in peace processes such as: high public expectations for the peace dividend; spoiler violence and insecurity; lack of a good strategy for disarmament; and failure of the political elite to connect with the concerns of the people. Barakat and Zyck (2009:1071) underscore a similar point when they note that "post-conflict countries have come to embody too many and frequently contradictory political and economic agendas" which in most cases tend to undermine countries recovering from conflict. These perspectives highlight the normative complexity of what 'post-conflict' entails. Northern Uganda fits the fragility and complexity of most post-conflict societies as I shall later explain in Chapter Four. Thus, like many 'post-conflict' situations the normative definition of what constitutes 'post' is a matter of endless debate (Collier et al., 2008:11; Barakat, 2010a).

‘Post-conflict reconstruction’, like peacebuilding, has diverse definitional connotations. Barakat (2005:11) opines that the challenge of reaching an agreeable definition of post-conflict reconstruction lies in the fact that different disciplines and sectors hold diverse definitions:

> “Political theories of reconstruction tend to emphasize the importance of institution for physical security and stability; economic theories with their belief in the importance of financial security take a more developmental approach; religious or humanitarian theories of reconstruction focus more on people and their capacity to survive, reconcile and forgive.”

In recent years transitional justice mechanisms have been incorporated as part of post-conflict reconstruction. This approach includes forgiveness, reconciliation and reparation through truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) that subsequently affect political, economic and social reorganization (Olsen et al., 2010; Hayner, 2002). Transitional justice has been reinforced by international legal regimes, the most recent of which is the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Peacebuilding NGOs

Developing a normative definition of peacebuilding NGOs is a daunting task given the diversity in characterizations of what entails NGOs. An operational definition has to be integrated into the general understanding of what constitutes NGOs. Generally, NGOs are different in sizes, operations and mandates. They are involved in very diverse activities ranging from education, human rights advocacy, development, peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance. Further, they have complex interactions between themselves, as well as with governments, inter-governmental organizations, international global networks and different development agencies. These factors have made it difficult to find

a comprehensive definition of NGOs. My focus will however be on developing a working definition of peacebuilding NGOs operating in post-conflict settings.

Johnson and Prakash (2007:222) are emphatic that "the NGO literature tends not to employ generalizable theories to study NGOs. Instead, it relies on descriptive typologies that are developed to study small subsets of the NGO population." As such, the literature ignores the fundamental question about the origins of NGOs, their internal organization (agency and accountability) and organizational strategies in social action (Johnson and Prakash, 2007:222).

The literature on NGOs says more about what NGOs are not than what they are by describing them simply as *non*-governmental or *non*-profit organizations (Brown and Korten, 1991:91). The imprecise definitions of what NGOs are have been attributed to the lack of a social science discipline that primarily focuses on NGO studies (Brown and Korten, 1991:91). This implies that NGOs have been incorporated into different mainstream academic disciplines that adapt their own viewpoint of NGOs. This has limited the contextual and organizational analysis of NGOs beyond the respective disciplines.

In relation to the post-conflict settings I would define the peacebuilding NGOs as *social entities that exist independently from or in relationship with governments, and are part of social change processes aimed at transforming situations of conflict into more peaceful, just and sustainable societies.* The emphasis is on the fact that peacebuilding NGOs do not operate alone, and are part of a network of actors working towards the attainment of peace and social change. This networked peacebuilding is a *process* and not a onetime event. NGOs

create a vital link between the grassroots, middle and top level leadership, even though their impact is often strongly experienced at the grassroots level.

Distinguishing Between Local and International NGOs

My initial expectation before going to the field was that there was a clear difference between the local and international NGOs. Surprisingly this was not the case, and I realized that they were closely similar in their approaches to peacebuilding. Five key factors demonstrate that there were no major distinctions in terms of peacebuilding approaches, between international and local NGOs. *First,* there was evidence of collaboration and networking between international and local NGOs, which led to relational construction of mutually conceptualized approaches to peacebuilding. The two exchanged expertise in the implementation of the peacebuilding programmes. This task-oriented collaboration minimized the apparent institutional differences between the local and international NGOs. *Second,* both focused their peacebuilding activities on closely similar areas of concern. Hence, the two categories addressed the post-conflict needs of resettlement; reintegration of the formerly abducted persons; forgiveness and reconciliation; and provision of basic needs. The common choice of these activities indicated a convergence in the analysis and interpretation of the contextual needs on the ground. *Third,* both categories had a close collaboration with the local community and emphasized local participation in peacebuilding activities as an important component of the sustainability of peace. This approach was further enhanced by the fact that the majority of staff from both categories of NGOs came from northern Uganda. The mutual emphasis on partnership, participation and networking contributed to the building of a common community of NGO peacebuilding. *Fourth,* all the NGOs

faced funding constraints and thus, felt the need to consolidate their resources. This prompted closer collaboration between the two categories of NGOs. *Fifth,* the international discourse on the choice between the ICC and culturally-based approaches to reconciliation, coupled with the internal complexities of the northern Uganda conflict, resulted in both categories of NGOs integrating cultural approaches to peacebuilding in their activities.

However, there were subtle differences between international and local NGOs. The differences lay in the institutional characteristics based on the principles of their respective foundations. There were three categories of international NGOs: first were the funding NGOs which were governmental. One was supported by an influential western country, another by an association of Christian churches and the last one was a major Catholic humanitarian organization. These institutions conducted their activities by subcontracting smaller NGOs, both local and international. Second were the inter-governmental NGOs that had traditionally provided humanitarian assistance, but in the last six years have been involved in peacebuilding activities. The end of overt conflict has led a number of these NGOs to change their activities from relief to peacebuilding and development. This category of NGOs traditionally received funding from western governments and did not face severe funding challenges as smaller NGOs. Third were smaller international NGOs that were affiliated to their country of origin, mostly from Europe, and operated in a few countries.

The local offices of both funding and inter-governmental NGOs in Gulu were headed by local staff, except for one funding agency that was headed by someone from a western country. However, the regional offices were in most cases headed by someone from a western country. The diversity in staff composition and funding availability influenced the way peacebuilding was carried out, albeit in subtle ways. I have elaborated this in Chapters Five and Six.

Among the local NGOs there were three categories. First were the religious NGOs that were affiliated to particular religious institutions. Such NGOs had strong coverage locally and nationally, and in some cases had connections abroad for funding. The second category included NGOs that were founded by an individual or group to respond to a particular social need and had over the years institutionalized and become an NGO. Such organizations would strictly fall under community based organizations (CBOs). The third category referred to NGOs that were founded locally but maintained relationship with bigger international organizations and foreign donors. In some cases, these NGOs had more resources locally than average international NGOs.

Locally established NGOs generally emerged in response to the urgent needs of the population, often related to experiences of violence by the LRA and Uganda government as I shall elaborate in both Chapters Five and Six. Funding however distinguished the local from international NGOs. While funding was a major issue of concern for both categories of NGOs, the concern was much

more pronounced among local NGOs. International NGOs had an extensive networking for funding than the local NGOs. I will discuss this in detail in Chapter Six. In the emergency period both categories of NGOs enjoyed sustained funding. However, in the post-conflict period there were considerable cuts in funding which brought new challenges.

The above explanation illustrates that there were strong similarities in peacebuilding approaches between local and international NGOs. The differences were subtle and were mainly based on institutional characteristics between the two categories as well capacities in funding resources. On the other hand, the two categories of NGOs cannot be taken to be homogeneous. There were internal structural differences between them. [4]

The closely related characteristics of the two categories of NGOs meant that peacebuilding discourse and practice could not be singularly attributed to the international or local NGOs nor could it be singularly identified with the community. Peacebuilding emerged as an interactive process.[5] I will therefore use the term 'NGO' to refer to both local and international NGOs, unless otherwise specified.

[4] For example, international NGOs with wider international presence were managed differently in comparison to international organizations that were limited to fewer countries. Similarly, local NGOs that were well established with diverse local and international partners had different structures and better opportunities for funding. However, these structural and institutional differences marginally affected the common characteristics of NGO peacebuilding approaches.

[5] The resultant peacebuilding approaches developed from a continuous process of interaction, exchange and learning between NGOs and local community in response to the changing dynamics of conflict and post-conflict recovery.

Local Community and Tradition

The term *local community* refers to the population in northern Uganda, specifically to the people in Gulu and Atiak where the research took place. The term *tradition* is often used to refer to people's way of life based on certain historical, social, political and cultural values. However, this term has normative contradictions given the divergent interpretations of what entails inherited and invented traditions. I prefer to use the term 'culturally-based' mechanisms to denote social practices based on cultural values. Discussions on the research findings will further clarify the diversity and fluidity in the comprehension of the culturally-based practices.

Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the approach one chooses to study a particular phenomenon; the logic behind the choice of the approach that weaves the research together; the justification for the choice of specific methods of data collection and analysis; and, a clear road map for how the research will be conducted (Silverman, 2005a:99; Kumar, 2008:5; Kothari, 2004:8). Hence, research methodology incorporates research methods such as the choice of case study, sampling, and methods of data gathering and analysis within a qualitative or quantitative framework. Research methodology is therefore larger than research methods in that the latter is a component of research methodology (Kothari, 2004:8).

In social research, methodology can be broadly defined in terms of 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' methods, but also more specifically in reference to specific approaches such as 'grounded theory' or 'conversation' analysis (Silverman, 2005a:99). Quantitative research refers to the collection of numerical data with the aim of deductively demonstrating the relationship between theory and research (Bryman, 2008:140). This process is based on the objective conceptualization of the social reality. Qualitative research, on the other hand, refers to scientific methods of inquiry that study a phenomenon within its natural setting and aims at making sense of it based on the meanings that people attach to it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). Qualitative research can be undertaken through the following processes: description of a phenomenon, context, problem or event; gathering of required information through observation, interviews, visual methods, and analysis by use of variables that can be measured on nominal or ordinal scales (Kumar, 2005:12). Silverman (2008:105-106) suggests that through qualitative research one can theorize about the data. A qualitative approach is therefore useful in connecting data to the social context, human behaviour and the changes they experience.

In this study I chose to use a qualitative approach but with the specific application of grounded theory. My application of grounded theory, as I shall explain below, facilitated the understanding of different factors in NGO peacebuilding within the context of research. This meant engaging with the data as it unfolded and undertaking analysis during and after the data collection. I appreciated the fact that qualitative research mainly focuses on asking the *how* and *what* questions in order to decipher the contextual behaviour and the social consequences of human actions. In my interview schedule (see Appendix,

Tables 2-6) most of my questions focused on finding out the *how* and *what* aspects of NGO peacebuilding. My other reasons for choosing qualitative approach is that it undertakes a closer examination of the chronology of events in order to identify historical patterns of events; uses comparative methods through triangulation; examines diverse social process (Silverman, 2008:106); and identifies implications of the findings to the broader picture of the issue of research. I found these elements to be relevant to my research. I will now elaborate on my research methodology and the logic behind the approach that I took for this research.

Research Design

Research design provides a compass for the research through a process of clarification of the purpose of the research, the guiding theory for the research, the research questions, methods of research, and sampling strategy (Robson, 2002: 81). A clear research design facilitates a more purposeful and holistic approach to deciphering the reality of research. It provides a framework that clarifies the understanding of what the participants say and how they interpret their reality rather than how the researcher would like to perceive that reality.

I chose to use a case study design by studying the northern Uganda context as a location of NGO peacebuilding activities. This was informed by the application of grounded theory that I will explain below. Creswell (1998:61) defines a case study as an exploration of a case (or multiple cases) through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. This means that a case has to be precise, focusing on a specific location, group, entity or organization (Robson, 2002:89). The aim is to conceptually understand this reality in a

theoretical analysis (Bryman, 2008:57). This approach provides a holistic understanding of the case and exposes the challenge of developing data analysis towards theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989:539).[6]

While to some extent the northern Uganda case can be considered to be representative of post-conflict settings, it is nevertheless unique. The uniqueness lay in the dynamics of conflict, historical patterns and NGO approaches to peacebuilding. In other words, while post-conflict contexts may share similar characteristics, it is important to conduct a field study in order to understand the contextual complexities of the conflict and peacebuilding responses. My objective was not to establish how the case findings can be generalized, but rather to understand what conclusions can be drawn from the data and how these conclusions shade light on the evaluation of the liberal peace critiques and post-conflict peacebuilding. In order to achieve this I had to work out a methodological approach and strategy that would effectively capture the flow of the unfolding findings from the data. I chose to use grounded theory as a methodological strategy in my qualitative data collection and analysis.

[6] The reasons behind the choice of a particular location highlight the uniqueness of the research and its contribution to the field of study. Creswell (2007) distinguishes three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. *Intrinsic* case study refers to a unique situation related to a single case and is limited in the extent to which it can be generalized. *Instrumental* case study is a study of a single case with the potential to be generalized to other social contexts. C*ollective* case study uses multiple case studies in order to represent a particular issue or social concern. Yin (2003:41) adds a *representative* case and states that the objective in this case is to "capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation", which eventually determine the generalizable aspects of the case. 1. CRESWELL, J. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* London: Sage; 2. YIN, R. K. (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Grounded Theory

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998:12) grounded theory is defined as a systematic process of generating theory (conclusions) from data. This process closely links the stages of data collection, analysis, and development of theory. It is therefore iterative, which means that the data collection and analysis are operated in tandem and as an interchangeable process.

The 'discovery' of grounded theory is attributed to Glaser and Strauss (1967b) who during their studies of *death and dying* in hospitals, designed a methodological process of qualitative research which they describe in their seminal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.* Glaser & Strauss (1967:3) define grounded theory as a theory that will:

> "fit the situation being researched and work when put into use. By fit we mean that the categories must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study; by work we mean that they must be meaningfully relevant and be able to explain the behaviour under study."

Grounded theory provided me with a tool that facilitated theory development through interactions between codes, concepts, categories and sub-categories. As a result the meanings behind the data emerged and I analyzed them to further make sense of the findings.

The interactive levels between NGOs, donors and community led to exploration of different ways in which the community could respond to the challenge of post-conflict reconstruction. Understanding how narratives and practice of peacebuilding were co-constructed within these interactions was important in establishing the sense-making process. Grounded theory therefore not only

describes the reality of research, it also explains it in order to make meaningful conclusions. In this process, grounded theory, in line with relational constructionism, enables the researcher to discover the processes of meaning-making and construction of social reality by posing the questions: What is happening here? How are the people telling their stories? How are they dealing with what is happening?

One of the limitations of grounded theory, according to Miller and Fredericks (1999) is that it does not offer a methodological process of theory testing for empirical adequacy and predictability. Besides, one can explain a phenomenon inductively without necessarily developing a theory from the research. On the other hand, the question of what exactly contains a theory in grounded theory is debatable.

However, theory should not be understood in generalizable terms as is done in experimental research. Grounded theory generates substantive theory that explains the situation in detail, with a capability for contextual referencing. Strauss and Corbin (1998:267) explain this point by underscoring that "the real merit of a substantive theory lies in its ability to speak specifically for the populations from which it was derived and to apply back to them."[7] In my field research, insights from different participants enriched the quality of the data;

[7] The emergent substantive theory is a result of iterative and integrative processes within data collection, analysis and theorizing. The generated theory (major conclusion) explains the different variations in the data (Benton, 2000). This process of analysis is referred to as 'constant comparison method' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which is an iterative process between categories to the point where one core category subsumes the major categories, hence explaining variations in the data. BENTON, D. 2000. Grounded theory *In:* CORMACK, D. (ed.) *The Research Process in Nursing* 4th ed. Oxford: Blackwell Science; GLASER, B. & STRAUSS, A. 1967a. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research,* London, Weiderfeld and Nicolson.

influenced the questions to be asked in the subsequent interviews; and broadened perspectives on issues under discussion. This meant that conclusions or theoretical explanations were drawn from the data and not from a preconceived conceptualization of the phenomenon of study.

Grounded theory has also been criticized as less rigorous, descriptive and explorative, subsequently offering limited information to the population (Fisher and Ziviani, 2004:185). In my research I noted that the rigour of grounded theory lay in an in-depth understanding of what is occurring in the data and how the participants express these occurrences. As a method grounded theory complements the standard expectations in social research, such as ethical consideration, which ensures that the population is sufficiently informed about the research, objectives and expectations, and that there is no harm to the participants. It would therefore be inaccurate to state that grounded theory is not rigorous and does not offer adequate information to the participants.

Another criticism is that while grounded theory has a clear systematic approach to the coding and development of categories, “it provides no such systematic or transparent way for gaining insight into the conceptual relationships between emergent concepts” (Wasserman et al., 2009:356). In my use of grounded theory I noted that the process of coding and development of concepts and categories is iterative and requires creating links between concepts and categories throughout the process. Dichotomizing the process, as Wasserman et al (2009) seem to suggest, limits the full potential of the grounded theory.

Creativity is fundamental in grounded theory (Cutcliffe, 2000:335) and ought to be balanced with the inductive process of developing theory or major conclusions. Equally important is the identification of data occurrences as sequential processes of interactional events and not simply as instances or single events (Silverman, 2005b). In other words, data occurs within a story of life and does not stand in isolation. It exists within the continuum of the generation of events in the social place of investigation.

A Methodological Approach to Research Design

I employed a systematic approach of engaging with the data through the case study research design, mostly influenced by the grounded theory approach. This meant *first*, being clear on what my research problem was; *second,* formulating the research questions I needed to ask in order to obtain the information from the participants. This also meant working out an interview schedule; *third* understanding what concepts I needed to study in order to unpack the problem; *fourth,* establishing a theoretical framework that would drive the research forward; *fifth,* identifying data collection methods that would facilitate the process of getting information from the participants; *sixth,* highlighting the ethical issues of concern that I had to address before, during and after the research; and *seventh,* having a clear understanding of the data analysis process, validity and reliability of the data.

Statement of the Problem

The primary interest of this research is to find out to what extent NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda was informed by the local reality and/or

external conceptualizations of peacebuilding. As I have already stated above, the idea was to establish how the interaction between NGOs, donors and local community influenced the discourse and practice of peacebuilding in northern Uganda. This research explored these issues by studying both international and local NGOs, donors and the perceptions of the local population in Gulu and Atiak.

Research Questions

In order to have a clear focus for the research, I formulated the following research questions:

Major Question:

To what extent is the NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda informed by the local reality and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding?

Specific Questions

1. What are the implications of the historical conflict dynamics and diverse peacebuilding attempts for NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda?
2. What are the NGO approaches to peacebuilding in northern Uganda?
3. What values and theories inform NGO peacebuilding approaches?
4. What are the local peacebuilding practices in northern Uganda?
5. What are the community perceptions and attitudes regarding NGO peacebuilding?

6. What are the external factors that influence conceptualization, definition and implementation of NGO peacebuilding?

7. How does the interaction between NGOs, community and donor agencies engender relational constructionism in peacebuilding?

Concepts and their Operationalization

I developed key concepts to be researched and operationalized them as follow:

Conflict background and Peacebuilding in northern Uganda: The initial task was to obtain secondary data through documented material that would give me a broader view of peacebuilding in northern Uganda. The secondary data came from documented literature on northern Uganda conflict, organizational reports of different NGOs, government reports, and independent documentations. I have explained this in the section on data collection below.

NGO approaches and strategies to peacebuilding: I needed to understand the peacebuilding activities conducted by the NGOs on the ground. This meant that I had to ask questions about NGO involvement in peace activities, their target group, approaches to selection of peace agents and how they (NGOs) assess and sustain their activities. Further interrogations focused on the levels of collaboration between the NGOs, donors and local community in peacebuilding activities. Other questions related to the strategies used by NGOs in peacebuilding, such as community mobilization, application of culturally-based mechanisms, training and workshops.

Values and theories that inform NGO peacebuilding: Understanding the internal driving force behind NGO peacebuilding activities was important in gaining insight to these activities. Hence, questions about the values and theories that inform NGO actions and relevance to the northern Uganda context shed more light on NGO approaches to peacebuilding. I was also interested in understanding the social change theories that NGOs applied to their peacebuilding work. I asked questions regarding changes that NGOs have experienced following their intervention, the anticipated outcomes and challenges faced. These questions revealed the key assumptions, and to some extent, the social change theories that inform NGO peacebuilding.

Local population's perception of NGO peacebuilding: Given that part of my interest was to understand whether NGO peacebuilding is informed by the local reality, I interviewed members of the local population regarding how they perceived NGO peacebuilding activities. I was conscious of the fact that perceptions would vary from individual to individual, group to group or village to village. In Gulu, I focused on understanding the local appreciation of the changes experienced through NGO interventions; the changes they would like to see in future; their assessment of NGO approaches to peacebuilding; and the frequency of their (local population) participation in NGO peacebuilding activities. In Atiak, my objective was to find out the people's perception on the potential value that NGO presence would bring to the existing community peacebuilding initiatives.

Local peacebuilding approaches to peacebuilding: My interest here was to understand the existing local approaches to peacebuilding in both Gulu and Atiak, and establish if they were different from the NGO peacebuilding approach. As previously noted, the distinction between the local and international NGOs was not as distinct as I expected. My investigation focused on the initiatives that were generated locally, their primary objectives, theories and values, target population, source of funding and sustainability. These were important in understanding the drive behind local community participation in peacebuilding, both in Gulu and Atiak. This perspective revealed how the NGO presence or lack of it played into the discourse and practice of peacebuilding.

External factors influencing conceptualization, definition and implementation of NGO peacebuilding: As I have already indicated in the statement of the problem, one of my major concerns was to understand the external driving forces behind NGO peacebuilding. I wanted to know whether the assertion that NGO peacebuilding serves liberal peace and hence, western agendas, is based on evidence from the ground. I therefore examined the external factors that influence NGO peacebuilding such as donor conditions, international aid to Government of Uganda and International Criminal Court (ICC) warrants of arrests on the LRA leaders. I examined the extent to which donors influenced NGO peacebuilding activities. The idea was to understand any tensions in points of convergence and divergence between the relevance of NGO peace activities to the local context, on the one hand, and the interest of the donor agencies, on the other. I probed the perceptions of NGOs and local community

on the role of International Criminal Court (ICC) and the implications of the ICC's intervention on peacebuilding activities.

Relational constructionism in the interaction between NGOs, local community and donor agencies: My aim was to investigate the dialogical processes that emerge from relational constructionism between NGOs, donors and local community. From the secondary literature I realized that there was a gap in knowledge on the kind of peacebuilding experiences that emerged from such interactions. The research aimed at examining the interactions between the three parties (NGOs, donors and local community) and the extent to which I could establish that NGO peacebuilding was informed by the local reality and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding.

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

In order to comprehend the ontological and epistemological aspects of the phenomenon of NGO peacebuilding, I chose to use *relational constructionism* as a theoretical framework. I have expounded this in Chapter Three. Relational constructionism is founded on social constructionism which studies how human beings co-construct meanings in search for truths that are culturally and historically situated (Burr, 1995:4).

I found the relational aspects of social constructionism to be vital in explicating my research methodology. While my interviews relied on contacts with individuals and groups, data analysis focused on the interactions between

stories, events, perceptions and attitudes of NGOs, donors and community participants. The emphasis was on processes of relationships in reality construction. In fact, relational constructionism emerges from social relationships within historical and cultural settings (Gergen and Gergen, 2007:462). Data therefore unfolds within an interactive system of relationships and is articulated in relational constructionism of the social reality under investigation.

Entering the Field of Research

Entering into the world of the participants is not an easy task. My previous work experience had familiarized me with the context of northern Uganda.[8] However, my knowledge of this place was based on generalized understanding of the dynamics of conflict and peacebuilding initiative without any backing from field research findings. Hence, as Charmaz (2006:14) proposes, I had to change my lenses from a peace practitioner to a researcher in order "to bring scenes closer and closer into view." This meant that I had to approach the participants as a researcher who was open to learning from them. [9] In line with the relational constructionism, I asked myself*: How are the participants constructing their social world? How do knowledge, culture and relationships construct the various meanings and social value for the community?* As Denzin and Lincoln (2008:8) observe, "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of

[8] I carried out consultancy work for Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). I conducted peacebuilding workshops for both the refugee and local community leaders in northern Uganda. This was in late 1990s and the situation has since changed. Most of Sudanese refugees have gone back to their country.

[9] This study helped me to deepen my knowledge on the dynamics of conflict and peacebuilding initiatives; see the bigger picture of the context of conflict; and understand the participants' views, interpretations and aspirations for peace in northern Uganda.

reality…They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning." This approach to research prepared me to strategically plan my field research.

Planning the Field Research

I worked out a systematic procedure of entering into the field. *First,* I identified my research sample based on the research questions that I had developed. I initiated contact with some organizations before going to the field, but only a few responded by email. When I arrived in Kampala I was able to get a list of all the NGOs in Gulu from the United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). This facilitated the process of directly contacting the NGOs. *Second,* I had to make arrangements for accommodation during my six months of research. I was fortunate to find accommodation at the Jesuit Fathers'[10] residence, 7 kilometres from Gulu town. I commuted between different locations using the local means of public transport referred to as 'boda boda', which means motorbikes. These were very handy in getting me to my participants, whether down the slope or up the hill, in villages and in town centres.

Third, once in Gulu I had to identify the community gatekeepers in order to facilitate my data collection. Gatekeepers are defined as "those who are in a position to 'permit' access to others for the purpose of interviewing" (Miller and Bell, 2002:53). I made appointments with the local government authorities, particularly local council officials, such as local council 3 (LC3) who are

[10] Jesuit Fathers refers to a religious order of Catholic Priests which I belong to.

government representatives charged with the public administration of specific locations.[11] The local councils supervise and implement government policies in the areas under their jurisdiction. I also gained access through religious leaders and NGO officials. These contacts were important because they facilitated the opening of other doors for the research. I discovered "several layers of gatekeepers" (Bryman, 2004: 519), which proved helpful in accessing more data. I generally preferred to access the communities independently from the NGOs in order not to bias my data on the local perception of NGOs. *Fourth,* I had to revise the ethical considerations that I had prepared before going to the field in order to increase my self-awareness during the data collection process.

Sampling Strategy and Selection of Participants

The primary data was drawn from four different samples: the first was the NGO data that focused on the NGO approaches to peacebuilding. I targeted both international and local NGOs, mainly focusing on peace coordinators, programme officers and administrative personnel. I reviewed the list of all the NGOs working in Gulu and embarked on identifying NGOs that were actively involved in peacebuilding activities like mediation, leadership training, youth initiatives for peace, culturally-based peacebuilding and training in conflict intervention mechanisms. Among these NGOs were three donor agencies.

[11] I have explained the different levels of local councils in Chapter Four. Suffice it to mention here that the decentralized system of governance in Uganda is managed at the local level through the leadership of the elected council leaders referred to as 'local council' (LC). Local Government Act 1997 instituted the local councils. The lowest rank is LC1 at the village level; then LC2 who is in-charge of several villages referred to as 'parishes'; LC3 takes care of a sub-county; LC4 is in-charge of a county; and LC5 is responsible for the whole district.

The second sample was the local community where NGOs were present. Research participants included local peace coordinators, local community participants who have directly participated in NGO peacebuilding activities and those that have not, community leaders, and direct beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of NGO peacebuilding. Initial interview contacts had a snow-ball effect in identifying potential research participants.

The third was a control sample in Atiak where NGOs are absent. I mainly focused on local leaders (community and government) and community members (individual and groups) engaged in peacebuilding activities. My interactions with participants in Gulu facilitated the process of accessing the research participants in Atiak. I also met a local politician from Atiak who had worked with different humanitarian NGOs in the past. He was helpful in suggesting some of the names. I got more contacts from a local church minister who carried out social activities in the community.

The fourth was the focus group sample from both Gulu and Atiak. Focus group interview refers to group interviews aimed at discussing a specific issue (Robson, 2002: 285). The accent is placed on building discussions around a topic and facilitating a joint construction of meaning on the focus areas of the research (Bryman, 2008:474). I identified individuals of mixed age groups who had experienced or taken part in community peacebuilding. In my sampling of the focus group, I was informed by Kumar (2005: 124) who maintains that the composition of the group ought to be people who shared a common experience of a situation or the social phenomenon of study. I sampled a group of

participants, 8 from Gulu and 7 from Atiak. The participants were selected through consultation with the gatekeepers and community leaders. About 40 per cent of the participants in the focus group were elders between the ages of 60-80 years, and the rest ranged between 18-50 years. The reason for this mix was to get a general experiential perception of the NGO peacebuilding but also an understanding of the culturally-based mechanisms of peacebuilding. The diversity in perspectives between the older and younger participants enriched the discussions.

I carried out a total of 49 formal interviews (see Table 1a below): For the NGO data, I conducted individual interviews with 14 participants from 9 international NGOs and 13 participants from 11 local NGOs. In some NGO samples I had more than one participant. I interviewed 9 key informants in the local communities where NGOs were active (Gulu); and 6 key informants where NGOs were absent (Atiak). I also interviewed 3 government institutions of peacebuilding; and 2 local government leaders (LC3), one from Gulu and the other from Atiak.

Table 1a Samples for Formal Interview

Interview Sector	Number of participants
International NGOs – 9	14
Local NGOs – 11	13
Community participants – Gulu	9
Community participants - control population in Atiak	6
Focus group discussions - Gulu	1 (8 participants)
Focus group discussions - control population in Atiak	1 (7 participants)
Government institutions of peacebuilding – Gulu	3
Local government leaders (LC3) – one in Gulu and one in Atiak	2
Total number of interviews	**49**

I also had 19 informal interviews with community leaders, NGO personnel, formerly abducted persons, government officials, religious leaders and community members from both Gulu and Atiak (see Table 1b below). I used informal interviews to clarify issues as they emerged from the formal interviews.

Table 1b – Samples for Informal Interviews

Interview sector	Number of participants
Community leaders	3 (two in Gulu and one in Atiak)
NGO personnel	2
Formerly abducted persons	4 (three in Gulu and one in Atiak)
Goverment officials	3 (two in Gulu and one in Atiak)
Religious leaders	3 (two in Gulu and one in Atiak)
Community members	4 (two in Gulu and two in Atiak)
Total number of interviews	19

Ethical Considerations

Obtaining Informed Consent

Upon engaging the gate-keepers I undertook the process of gaining voluntary and informed consent from potential participants. What actually constitutes adequate consent is debatable because in most cases it depends on how the "definition of consent is operationalized" (Sin, 2005:281). Besides, the "complexity of the research demands different forms of consent" (Sin, 2005: 281). I had to figure out a more appropriate social-cultural approach to gaining voluntary and informed consent of the participants.

The idea of seeking participant consent was foreign to many. Some participants, for personal reasons, were not comfortable with signing the consent form. The majority, particularly from the local community, confirmed their willingness to participate in the interview through an oral consent. Creed-Kanashiro et al (2005:925) raise awareness of the fact that "verbal rather than written consent is appropriate in some populations."

The participants were first provided with the research information sheet (see Appendix: data collection instrument no. 1), which detailed: the aims and objectives of the research; the expectations on the participants; the methods of data collection; and the role of participants in the interpretation and publication of the collected data.[12] For the focus group discussions, I made it clear that while a participant could withdraw from the interview, he or she could not retract the information already given. This is because focus group discussions entail a common process of construction of meaning through interactive discussion. Hence, individual contributions become part of the group discourse. The potential participants for both individual and focus group interviews were given three days to decide if they were willing to participate under these conditions. Participants were informed that individual interviews would last between 1-2 hours and focus group discussions for 2-4 hours.

[12] This information indicated that full confidentiality and anonymity would be observed during and after the interview; the collected data would be securely preserved; and the participant would have the freedom to abandon the interview at any time without explanation.

At the beginning of each interview I also asked the participants whether they consented to the recording of the interview, and in most cases I got a positive response. A few participants declined due to their position in the organization or for other personal reasons. On two occasions I was asked to first obtain an official permission from a higher authority within the organization before I could gain participant consent. In both of these occasions permission was granted.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

To safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, I assured them that the information given would only be used for the PhD research and later for publication. Where there were attributes that could make the identity of the interviewee obvious, I coded them and they remained known only to me (see Appendix Table 17). I had to use translators in two interviews, and in both cases they had to sign confidentiality agreements prior to the interviews. For the focus group discussions, I explained to the participants that even though they were aware of the contributions made by each individual, they were to observe anonymity and confidentiality as far as the identity and contributions of the participants were concerned.

Validation

I gave the participants the option of reading through the interview transcripts in order for them to edit, comment, correct, add or subtract their comments, and then return them to me with comments, after four days. I clarified that I would take their feedback into account. Only one of the participants took up the offer, a

few requested a summary report, and the rest were not interested in receiving any documentation after the interview. A few NGO participants were interested in getting some feedback (a summary of the general findings) whereas the majority of the community participants did not request any documentation, probably because of lack of a reading culture.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity, according to Robson (2002: 22), is the self-awareness about how the researcher's social identity and background impacts the research process. From a social constructivist perspective reflexivity implies being aware of individual presuppositions and how these affect the research (Charmaz 2006:130-1). Such consciousness neither invalidates nor validates the outcomes of the research but simply raises one's self-awareness in the data construction process (Gergen and Gergen 2007: 467).

I had to be cognizant of the fact that researching in a somewhat familiar terrain demands a high level of self-awareness and humility to be open to learning and discovering new information. While familiarity with the context was an advantage in making initial contacts, it did not render me indifferent to the data collection process. Hermann (2001:78) observes that such a familiarity will always have the baggage of "preconceived values and specific identity." I had to resist the temptation to anticipate answers from the participants. I gradually learned to let the participant develop their stories from their own perspectives.

In so doing, I borrowed from Enosh and Buckbinder (2005:589) who ascertain that letting a participant give an account of a "fully developed narrative on his or her own terms" is fundamental to collecting authentic data.

I was conscious of the fact that interviewing is an interactive process of power relations. I engaged my participants as a PhD student, a man, a Jesuit Catholic priest, a Kenyan and peace practitioner. These identity traits created an imbalance in power relations between the participants and myself. Being male in a patriarchal society meant that I carried with me the social perception of the characteristic representation of the dominant male in the community. This perception did not, however, manifest itself in a manner that was obvious to me during the research. As a Kenyan, I was viewed as coming from a dominant neighbour, especially because of Kenya's domination of the regional economy and politics. In most cases, this did not emerge as a hindrance. Occasionally participants were interested in discussing Kenyan politics with me, thus easily breaking the ice for further interview conversations.

I was also conscious of the fact that I was a Catholic priest and the participants could be inclined to see me as a minister and not a researcher. I clarified at the beginning of every interview that I was conducting the research as a PhD candidate and not as a priest. This did not prevent occasional requests, especially in the villages, for a blessing, counselling or prayer sessions. It proved to be difficult, but I insisted on saying 'no' to such requests in order not to mix up roles and bias the data. In some cases the participants could have given a more positive view to responding to conflict because they expected me to disagree with a 'non-peaceful' approach to conflict resolution. However, these

instances were rather rare. I undertook a daily review of self-comportment and participant reaction in order to increase my self-awareness about any potential negative interference with the research.

My role as a PhD candidate created expectations among a few participants, especially the young ones who hoped I could help them find academic scholarships abroad. I recommended some resources and websites that could be helpful for the interested persons but provided no commitment to financial assistance.

Being a Luo from Kenya was an added advantage because the Acholi belong to the larger Luo community, albeit from a different dialect. The Kenyan Luo people are said to have migrated from Sudan where they were once together with the rest of the Luo communities (Shaw and Mbabazi, 2009). I could follow, to some extent, the conversations in Acholi but nearly all my participants could understand and speak English.

Security and Safety

Northern Uganda has enjoyed relative peace since the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in 2006. However, as in many post-conflict situations, I had to take the necessary precautions to ensure my safety and security. Even in post-conflict settings apparent peace can easily be lost, particularly given that "conflicts are often characterized by dynamic and mutating patterns of violence" (Goodhand, 2000:12). I therefore shared my daily itinerary with the Jesuit colleagues with whom I was living; I had a cell phone with me at all times and I

conducted my interviews between 8:30am and 5:00pm. These cautionary measures allowed me to be vigilant throughout the data collection period. Through some of my previous contacts I obtained credible information about the general status of security in the areas where I intended to conduct data collection.

I also ensured that the participants felt safe by asking them in advance their preferred location for the interview. I was conscious of the fact that participants should not be harmed by any circumstances of the interview. Bryman (2008:120) however, warns that the researcher is limited in what he/she can do since not all circumstances can be anticipated. For the local community most interviews were done in a shaded area outside their houses, in a school or a church, whereas for the NGOs it was mostly in offices, and in a few cases, in a restaurant. There were no incidents of insecurity or harm to the participants.

Self-care

I had anticipated that some of my participants could have had horrific experiences of the war which left them traumatised. I was therefore cautious not to further aggravate their condition. I relied on my previous experience of working in the field to detect potential cases of trauma. I had three cases of obvious trauma, and I chose not to interview them. To detect cases of trauma, I carried out pre-interview conversations to better understand the participant's current emotional state. I posed questions such as: How long have you lived here? Where else have you lived before? Where were you during the conflict? These questions evoked discussions on personal experiences of war. Five out

of nine community participants in Gulu pointed out that 22 years of conflict had traumatised the whole community in one way or another to varying degrees. I was amazed by the level of community resilience in dealing with these difficult situations.

I also took caution not to fall victim of vicarious trauma. In most cases vicarious trauma occurs as a result of being empathetically involved with the traumatic experiences of the participant (Vrklevski and Franklin, 2008). This could affect the psychosocial health of the researcher. To counter such an occurrence, I had regular debriefings with my Jesuit colleagues who were much more experienced in working in the area. Regular discussions on my daily experiences helped me to be aware of the diverse social issues within the community, particularly those that I was confronted with.

Research Methods in Data Collection and Analysis

Research methods mainly refer to instruments used to collect data. Due to the qualitative nature of this research, I used formal and informal interviews, as well as observation to collect the primary data. I also reviewed existing documentation for the secondary data. These methods were important in deciphering NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. I was informed by Groat and Wang (2002:395) who assert that in case studies, data collection holds the "potential to uncover the multiple, complex, and sometimes overlapping factors that eventually lead to particular outcomes." Data collection methods help in uncovering the complexity behind the phenomenon of study.

Secondary Data Collection and Analysis

The study of NGO peacebuilding in a post-conflict setting raises the challenge of understanding the underlying factors of conflict and existing literature on NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. Hence, my initial task was to establish the secondary data that could serve as a background to understanding the 22 year conflict in northern Uganda. Archival data was mainly obtained from published and unpublished sources such as books, journals, newspaper articles, conference proceedings, organizational and government reports and documents.

Secondary data is limited on the extent to which it can be relied upon for its accuracy and reliability. Long-Sutehall et al (2010:3) explain that "the purpose of the secondary data analysis should be transparent, detailing methodological and ethical considerations and explaining any decisions made regarding missing data so that the interpretative process of knowledge production is transparent." However, Bryman (2009:561) raises the concern that secondary data may lack full disclosure of whether ethical issues from data collection were addressed. Hence, secondary data alone is not sufficient. [13]

I divided the secondary data analysis into three categories. First was the historical background of the conflict in northern Uganda: the analysis focused on the political history of Uganda and diverse peacebuilding efforts by different actors. This exercise was important in identifying the root causes of the northern

[13] My use of the secondary data was complementary to the in-depth analysis of the primary data. The secondary data was critical in guiding the process of theoretical sampling, particularly because I analyzed most of the secondary data before and during the field research. This process was helpful in identifying the emerging data and cues for the next data to be collected. The literature clarified the theoretical underpinnings that would shed some light on the different perspectives of my research.

Uganda conflict. The second was on NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. The data analysis highlighted the diverse categories of NGOs and their roles and challenges in humanitarian assistance, human rights, advocacy and peacebuilding. The third category was the secondary data from government officials. These were minimal, mostly limited to government policies and annual reports. The data shed some light on what the government was doing for peace and human rights advocacy and their areas of collaboration with the NGOs.

Primary Data Collection and Analysis

Interviewing

I used semi-structured interviews as my principal instrument of data collection. I prepared an interview schedule (see Appendix, Tables 2-6) which was important in maintaining the focus on the key concepts to be explored. The flexibility in the semi-structured interviewing allowed for a more conversational approach to the interviews.

All my interviews were conducted face to face. The advantage with this approach was that I was able to pick up social cues such as gestures, facial expressions, intonations and body language which by themselves complemented what was being said. However, as a researcher I had to be conscious of the fact that these physical expressions could interfere with the process of data collection. I also had to make sure that I maintained the theme and objective of the research. On one occasion while interviewing a renown religious leader I realized that I was getting so absorbed by stories about his

personal experience that we gradually drifted away from the main issues of discussion. I had to interrupt the story and re-direct the discussion using more focused questions. Wengraf (2001:194) maintains that it is important for the researcher to observe "double attention", which means listening to the participant while maintaining the focus of the research, depth of the inquiry and allocated time.

The focus group interviews were interactive and brought together different ideas in a process of common sense-making. For effective moderation of the discussions I was guided by Puchta and Potter (2004:25-38) who highlight the key characteristics of a good moderation.[14] I emphasized at the beginning of the interview that every opinion was important and that each participant ought to be aware that there could be differences in opinions in the course of the discussion.

Observation

I used observation on some occasions as a means of collecting data. However, this was peripheral among the methods used. Kumar (2005) defines observation as "a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place." I visited the villages to witness the resettlement and reintegration of formerly abducted persons. I also saw some remnants of the displacement camps. Informal conversations with the people helped me to understand their desire for peace

[14] These are: have a clear objective of the discussion; encourage informal conversations for interaction to happen; read the mood or general psychology of the participants to keep in pace with the discussion; be aware of word choices, intonations; pose the right questions; and ensure that the seating arrangement is favourable for the discussion.

and participation in peace activities. These gave me a general picture of how the conflict had affected the area. It also helped me understand the contextual references made by the participants.

I used observation in an NGO peacebuilding workshop in order to understand the peacebuilding approaches applied by the NGO. I was able to interact with the workshop participants and learn their perceptions of NGO peacebuilding approaches. As Walsh (2001:67) asserts, the aim of observation is to understand the motives and meanings that people attach to their actions and perceptions as well as "gain a deeper insight into the real way of life, beliefs and activities of the group in their 'natural setting'." The interaction with participants gave me new leads into issues that I could delve into in my next interviews. I was also able to get new contacts for more interviews.

Primary Data Analysis

I carried out primary data analysis in four stages, all of which were mainly influenced by grounded theory: coding in the course of the data collection; transcription and further coding; use of Nvivo[15] software for organization and coding of the data; and analysis of the emerging themes and categories.

In the first stage, I undertook the coding process while carrying out data collection. Since I was using grounded theory as a qualitative methodology for the research, I had clear criteria for coding of themes, concepts and categories

[15] Nvivo is computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that is useful in organizing data.

as they developed. I made notes of these themes, concepts and categories in my transcripts and revised them at the end of the day. Later, I was able to focus and refocus my interviews according to the progression of the emerging information. I began by using open coding which is the first step towards understanding the data with a more open mind, letting it unfold as much as possible. During open coding I had to revisit my research question to see that I was within the focus of the research. I made as many notes and memos as possible in the course of the interviews. Scribbling notes in columns next to the interview texts was important in generating ideas for initial coding, possible themes and categories, as they emerged.[16]

In the second stage, having collected all the primary data I needed, I began the process of transcribing the recorded interviews and typing my handwritten notes. This process allowed me to have a broad overview of the information I had collected. It also gave me the insight to follow up on gaps in information provided by the interviewed participants as well as to request additional documentation that could be helpful in filling the information gap. I listened to the interview recordings, and re-read the interview transcripts in order to familiarize myself with what had been said. In the process of listening and reading I continued the "substantive" coding process which, according to Glaser

[16] I realized that I needed to keep on organizing my interview data as it unfolded. I referred to the prompt questions suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1995 cited Bryman, 2008:550): "Of what general category is this item of data an instance? What does this item of data represent?...What sort of answer to a question about a topic does this item of data imply? What is happening here?" I further examined other questions like: What are the people saying? What is their understanding of what is happening? These prompt questions were helpful in understanding the data sets within a wider perspective and generating further focused interrogation in subsequent interviews: LOFLAND, J. & LOFLAND, L. H. 1995. *Analyzing social settings : a guide to qualitative observation and analysis,* Belmont, Calif. Wadsworth; BRYMAN, A. 2008. *Social Research Methods.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(2004:12), conceptualizes the "empirical substance of the area of research." As previously stated, I had begun this process during the interviews. [17]

The process of note taking and coding spawned many ideas about possible interpretation of the data. I began thinking about broader theoretical concepts in relation to the different texts of the scripts, subsequently generating theoretical codes that conceptualize the empirical data. Glaser (2004:12) asserts that the "essential relationship between data and theory is a conceptual code. The code conceptualizes the underlying pattern of a set of empirical indicators within the data." For example, responses on the use of cultural rituals of reconciliation prompted me to investigate the diverse aspects of rituals of reconciliation.[18] Thus, the process of coding meant that a single text from the interview could be coded in many different ways.

At some point I realized that I had very many codes and that I needed to organize them further. I started by examining how the codes were related and the extent to which they reflected people's experiences on the ground. This was an arduous task because in order to relate the codes to people's lived experiences I had to re-contextualize them and see how they fitted in the different narratives of the participants. At the same time this process revealed the links in the participants' narratives. I began to see how different stories,

[17] I found out that in this iterative process, new insights emerged every time I engaged with the transcribed data, driving me to look at the interview transcripts again and again. The question at the back of my mind was whether I was accurately capturing the articulation and essence of the lived experiences of the participants.

[18] Such aspects included: the historical background of the use of the rituals; the significance of rituals in reconciliation processes; and the role of culture in sense-making and co-construction of social reality within the framework of relational constructionism.

events and interpretations were related or different. This prompted me to identify common themes and categories.

In the third stage I proceeded to a systematic organization of different codes that had emerged. In order to do this I decided to do a line numbering of the transcript in a Microsoft Word document. This helped me establish an easy reference to the codes and categories created. I looked at the emerging themes and manually jotted them down as categories and sub-categories alongside their properties (see Appendix, Tables 7-16). This had to be done meticulously, and was cumbersome and time-consuming, but it had the added benefit of increasing my familiarity with the interview transcript. The exercise of data analysis prepared me conceptually for the treatment of the transcript with Nvivo, even though I had not anticipated such a progression.

The use of Nvivo was important in further organizing and analyzing the data. I started off by separately importing into Nvivo each interview transcript of individual participant or focus group discussions. This made it easier for the referencing of the coding since the retrieved sections of the interview was recorded with the name and affiliation of the interviewee.

I used categories and sub-categories that I had identified to create *tree nodes* in Nvivo. I had to revise my tree-nodes several times, arrange, and re-arrange them in order to establish some coherence in the flow of the data. Each tree-node represented different categories and each 'child-node' denoted a sub-

category. These categories had textual reference from the interview transcripts making it easier to interact with the texts and identify emerging trends. Locating the truncated texts in the original interview transcript was a straight forward activity since the Nvivo software gave me the exact reference and location of the coded text.[19]

However, Nvivo has been criticized for mutilating texts and breaking the continuity of the interview transcript with the result that, "the narrative flow of interview transcripts and events recorded in field notes may be lost" (Bryman, 2008:566). Yet another criticism is that it does not account for omitted texts which might just be as important for the process of analysis (Fieldling and Lee, 1998:74). The programme has also been criticized for quantifying data and missing out on the richness of the data (Richards, 1999); it is also perceived to limit qualitative research to a rigid process of automated analysis (Kelle, 1995).

These criticisms seem to consider Nvivo to be the sole locus for analysing and understanding the interview transcript whereas in actual fact, Nvivo should be one of the many ways of organizing and analyzing the transcripts. For example, in my case I started by manually coding the text during the interviews and continued this after transcribing. I then performed a hand written categorization of the data. This meant that by the time I got to Nvivo I had already interacted with the transcript at different levels.

[19] The process of coding through tree-nodes, child-nodes and sibling nodes generated many ideas from the transcript. It also increased familiarity with the text and brought in different perspectives of understanding the views of the participants. Nvivo was thus a useful tool for coding and retrieval of texts from the interviews, which is in line with grounded theory technique. This provided a major advantage over the use of manual techniques of organizing data and identifying possible logical flows.

The major challenge in the use of Nvivo is that it leaves one with many tree nodes, which if not carefully synthesized can be overwhelming. It is therefore important to maintain patience and consistency. Glaser (2002) emphasizes that the key to understanding the interview transcripts is to persistently maintain the patience of journeying with the findings.

The fourth stage involved drawing together the various themes and categories into four main headings: relational context of conflict; NGO approaches to peacebuilding; local perceptions of NGO peacebuilding; and relational constructionism in NGO peacebuilding. The emergent categories and sub-categories in each title also had properties associated with them as contextual manifestations (see Appendix, Tables 7-16). This process of analysis influenced the structuring of my chapters and the logical flow of the thesis.

Research Limitations and Methodological Challenges

There were several challenges that emerged as limitations of the research. I will highlight the key ones and explain how I responded to them:

Reliability and Triangulation

One of the challenges of using qualitative research is that it studies "partial views of reality that are obtainable" (Oakley 1990:25). This means that the data gathering could be limited in scope and perspective, hence raising questions about reliability. In order to address the challenge of reliability I used *triangulation*. Since its introduction into research by Denzin (1970), triangulation

has become a common lingua in social research.[20] Morallis et al (2006:47) define triangulation as “an epistemological claim concerning what more can be known about a phenomenon when the findings from data generated by two or more methods are brought together.” In other words, the emphasis lies in the process of collecting more accurate data set in order to establish reliable findings from the research. The analysis of the secondary data facilitated the emergence of a bigger picture of the contextual situation of NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. I compared the NGO data with the community perception, and then went back to the community for further interrogation, and vice-versa.

Another challenge in reliability was about translation. As I have stated above, on two occasions I had to use a translator. I was conscious of the fact that meanings can sometimes be lost through translation. I occasionally had to rely on my first language, Luo, to decipher the exact meaning behind the words. This was helpful in differentiating between textual and contextual meaning of words. Textual meaning refers to word by word translation, whereas contextual translation places the words within their significance in the context. In other words, “each language represents a separate reality" (Bassnett, 1996:19). The various meanings in the two translations became clearer as I applied triangulations.

[20] Denzin (2006) identifies four types of triangulations: *Data triangulation* which involves time, space, and persons; *Investigator triangulation* which implies the use of multiple researchers in an investigation; *Theory triangulation* which entails the use of multiple theoretical schemes as a means of interpreting the phenomenon; and *Methodological triangulation,* which involves the use of different methods of data collection such as interviews, observations, documents and questionnaires. DENZIN, N. 2006. *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook* Chicago, Aldine Transaction.

Focus Group Discussions

One of the challenges I faced in focus group discussions was the lack of spontaneity among the participants. Following cultural norms, the younger participants often waited for the older ones to speak before they could give their opinions. On the other hand, the older participants spoke more, with authority and experience, making it difficult for the younger ones to present a different opinion. I became aware of this early in the interview and encouraged different people to speak in order to increase individual participation. In some cases I had to direct prompt questions to a specific individual by referring to him or her by name. For example, 'How would you assess this particular issue, Miss Acayo or Mr. Okello?' This approach was helpful in eliciting responses from participants who were reluctant to speak out. I drew on my previous experience of group moderation to facilitate the group. This was largely successful, but the additional challenge was that as a young researcher, the expectation from the elders was that I had to observe the same cultural norms. At the end of both focus group interviews I was satisfied with the way the discussions went.

Challenges in NGO Research

One of the challenges of researching NGOs in northern Uganda is the diversity, commonality and uniqueness of the NGOs' identities and cultures. NGOs had diverse histories that shaped their approaches to peacebuilding; held different funding capacities; possessed diverse levels of integration into the local community; and maintained varied priorities in their agenda. I found out that there was a thin line between an individual's perspective and the organizational stance. I used triangulation to check the information between participants, and

also consulted secondary materials in form of publications and documentations whenever necessary.

I applied the theoretical framework of relational constructionism and took note of how individuals within the community and NGO sector were constructing meanings of their work, and how this was interacting with the perceptions of the local community. Hence, my concern shifted from naively seeking a common cultural approach by the NGOs to learning from the divergent and convergent experiences. This meant that individuals were part of the meaning construction of the organization through a relational process of construction of social reality. Soin and Scheytt (2006:56) assert that "the means by which individuals ascribe meanings to specific events and circumstances in and around the organization" have a major contribution to the uniqueness of organizations.

Another challenge was accessing archival data. On two occasions I had difficulties in accessing some NGO archival data because the participants felt that the documents were too sensitive for public consumption. I respected their decision, and supplemented the information gap by further probing the participants within the two organizations. There were also participants who had promised to send the documents by email, but did not honour their promises despite several requests. Additionally, some of the activity reports were outdated and did not reflect the current situation on the ground. Likewise, some NGO websites were not up to date. I was also confronted with the challenge of determining reliability and validity of some of the documented information. In some cases the authors of the NGO reports were no longer working with the organization. As I have noted above I applied triangulation to address most of

the above challenges. The above challenges were common to those that are often associated with organizational research.[21]

Transcription of Recorded Interviews

Transcription is today questioned as lacking in objectivity. In other words, we can no longer “assume the transparency of language” (Riessman, 1993:12). Transcription is itself “an interpretive act" (Tilley and Powick, 2002:292) that reveals both the perspective of the transcriber as well as the transcribed. In the course of transcribing I had to reconstruct the scene of the interview, and revisit the social cues like facial expressions and gestures. I began to recognise the deeper meaning after reading the transcripts several times and conducting analysis based on the grounded theory. I compared my initial coding during the interview, and after. It was evident to me that the act of transcribing is indeed an interactive process that adds clarity into the text.

Researching in Post-conflict Settings

Researching post-conflict settings poses different kinds of challenges that call for self-awareness. These could range from security, provision of basic needs,

[21] In discussing challenges in organizational research, Buchanan and Bryman (2007:486) maintain that organizational research “today reflects the paradigm diversity of the social sciences in general.” They identify three issues that render organizational research challenging and fluid: First, the widening boundaries of the issues that can be researched, such as organizational behaviour, culture and history or issues on feminism, masculinity and the role of organizations in social change. Second, there are many paradigms that can be applied in the field research: from the traditional positivist approach in the study of organizations to interpretivist, critical theorist and other social science approaches. The third issue is methodological inventiveness which has led to the inclusion of a myriad of research methods in organizational research. These issues make it difficult to develop a research approach that integrates the different factors in organizational research. BUCHANAN, D. A. & BRYMAN, A. 2007. Contextualizing Methods Choice in Organizational Research. *Organizational Research Methods,* 10, 483-501.

trauma and the need for reconciliation. I was faced with the challenge of addressing three main issues: First was the concern of giving a voice to the research participants, particularly in situations of human rights abuse. One of the major ethical challenges of researching in situations of post-conflict and vulnerability is the researcher's urge to take action against witnessed situations of human rights abuse. This can bring about dilemmas of confidentiality. Robson (2002: 71) cautions that while a researcher has specific ethical responsibilities, this does not give her/him "a privileged voice on what constitutes ethical behaviour in others."[22] I was careful not to address the human rights abuse personally, but conducted discreet inquiries to see if any action was being taken on the ground. I learned that some civil society groups were addressing these kinds of issues through media campaigns and other means of advocacy. With the consent of the concerned participants, I referred the two cases of abuse to a human rights organization.

Second was how to deal with different expectations from the participants. On a few occasions the participants asked me to recompense them in return for the interviews. I told them that I did not have anything to give and that I hoped the research would contribute to the future of peacebuilding practice in northern Uganda.

Third was how to address the multiple voicing. Conflict provokes diverse emotions and perceptions about peace and conflict. I had to find ways of dealing

[22] Goodhand (2000:14) is however of the opinion that the researcher can have a positive impact by "countering myths and stereotypes, identifying information blockages and giving voice to the oppressed." GOODHAND, J. 2000. Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability. *Forced Migration Review*, 8,12-15.

with the diversities in ideas, understandings and emotions among the participants. While in the early stages of the research this seemed challenging, it later emerged that the data was being enriched by these varieties of coherent and incoherent perspectives. Gergen and Gergen (20007: 468) assert that multiple voicing allows for the removal of the dominant voice of the researcher by bringing in different perspectives over the same issue, acknowledging the convergences and divergences in opinions, valid conclusions and lack of coherence within the data.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The *First Chapter* is the introduction to the thesis. In this section I highlight key arguments of the study; definition of terms; research methodology and research instruments of data collection; and the key research question that orients the focus and scope of the study. Having described the chosen locations and justification for their selection, I elaborate on the data collection methods, which are mainly, semi-structured interviews; focus groups, observation and secondary data. I also explain the sampled research population and the reasons for their selection. I end this section by looking at data analysis approaches, limitations and methodological challenges of the research.

In *Chapter Two* I examine the conceptualization of NGO peacebuilding. I analyse the various periods, conceptualization and events that have defined NGOs' role in relief, development and peacebuilding in post-conflict settings.

This shades light on the values and theories that inform NGO peacebuilding. In a further discussion, I review the extent of validity of the generalizations made by liberal peace critics that peacebuilding NGOs are subjects of the liberal peace agenda. My analysis of the external influences on NGOs, particularly by the donor agencies and their governments, accentuates discussions on the sustainability and relevance of NGO peacebuilding.

In *Chapter Three* I discuss the conceptual framework of relational constructionism, which provides the guiding lens for the thesis. I explain why relational constructionism has been applied as a theoretical framework, and how it weaves together the arguments of the thesis. I further examine the relevance of relational constructionism in responding to the research question. I articulate this by looking at the link between relational constructionism and NGO peacebuilding.

In *Chapter Four* I analyse the contextual background to NGO peacebuilding by examining the historical and current aspects of the northern Uganda conflict and subsequent implications on NGO peacebuilding. This includes analysis of the legacy of violence and armed resistance over many years, with a more detailed investigation into the 22 year conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Uganda (GOU). Having laid this foundation, I focus the discussion on the different peacebuilding efforts which include: conflict mediation initiatives; constitution making processes; reforms on structures of governance; nation building mechanisms; culturally-based approaches to

conflict intervention; social, political and economic interventions; international mechanisms of conflict intervention through the ICC legal apparatus; and militarized interventions.

Chapters Five and Six focus on data analysis. In *Chapter Five* I analyze the collected data on NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. In the light of relational constructionism, the analysis seeks to establish specific areas of priority in the NGO peacebuilding; the approaches used in addressing the post-conflict challenges to peace; and the interactive processes between NGOs, donors and community, and how these relationships contribute to the peacebuilding discourse and practice.

In *Chapter Six* I explain the different levels of relational constructionism between the NGOs, donors and community, based on the research findings. I revisit the concept of relational constructionism in connection to the data. My aim is to demonstrate the levels of relational constructionism between NGOs, donors and community, while relying on Lederach's (1997) pyramid framework that depicts multi-level interactions. The pyramid conceptualization expounds the complex interaction between NGO peacebuilding at the grassroots level leadership; middle level leadership under the influence of NGOs and civil society; and top level leadership represented by donor agencies and governments. I conclude by asserting that NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda is a process of relational constructionism that engages NGOs, donors and the local community in peace and conflict transformation processes.

In *Chapter Seven* I draw together the major conclusions of the thesis and revisit the main research question in order to establish the extent to which the question has been answered.

Chapter Two: Conceptualization of NGO Peacebuilding

Introduction

This chapter is focused on analyzing the NGO literature in post-conflict peacebuilding in order to situate NGO peacebuilding in the broader peacebuilding discourse, and identify the gaps in the literature. These perspectives will shed light on the extent to which NGO peacebuilding is co-opted by the liberal peace agenda and/or whether it is a social dynamic phenomenon based on complex interactive processes of relational constructionism.

The discussion in this chapter examines five different but interrelated aspects in NGO peacebuilding that explain the development of NGO engagement in peacebuilding and implications of the conceptualization of the peace discourse in post-conflict reconstruction. The first aspect is the *Post-Cold War* period that was marked by the increased participation of NGOs as active agents in peacebuilding and conflict resolution following increased internal conflicts that prompted humanitarian emergencies. The second dimension discusses *operational context of NGO peacebuilding and the liberal peace agenda.* In the post Cold War period internal conflicts led to large numbers of civilian deaths prompting global consciousness on *sovereignty* as *responsibility* to protect citizens from harm (Hunt and Bellamy, 2011; Bellamy, 2009). The process of stabilization of conflict affected states has led to the liberalized approach to peacebuilding. The third aspect is the *critique of the liberal peace.* In this phase,

there have been calls for the revision of peacebuilding practices that are heavily dependent on military machinery and donor funding (Rogers, 2008a; Pugh, 2004). The liberal peace critics assert that liberal peace operates within the framework of human security, mainly focusing on countering conflict impact by advancing democracy, human rights, liberalized economy and the rule of law (Mac Ginty, 2010; Newman, 2009; Richmond, 2008; Richmond, 2010b). The fourth dimension discusses *NGO peacebuilding and its relationship to liberal peace*. The critics of liberal peace accentuate that NGO peacebuilding has been co-opted into the framework of liberal peace agenda (Reimann, 2005; Richmond, 2009a; Richmond, 2005a). The fifth aspect opens discussions *beyond the critique of liberal peace* in order to identify the gaps in the literature and explore alternative interpretations and understandings of NGO peacebuilding.

Part I: Post-Cold War Period and Emergence of NGOs in Peacebuilding

NGOs emerged in the post-Cold War era as active players in efforts to mitigate and end conflicts. The post-Cold War period, to some extent, ended the ideological partisan approach to international relations and aid delivery. The emphasis shifted from political partisanship to promotion of principles of democracy and global peace. Goodhand (2006) asserts that the end of the Cold War, the subsequent increased promotion of liberal democracy and conditionality of aid in the 1990s by western donors have promoted the reciprocal conditionality of peace. Thus, states that adhered to principles of democracy were seen as allies of the western nations.

In the post-Cold War period NGOs became an alternative channel of development and human rights advocacy. In the 1990s there was a fundamental shift on the role of NGOs in post-conflict reconstruction. The traditional involvement of NGOs in humanitarian relief broadened to include peacebuilding. Minear (2002:156) holds that although "humanitarian action has always had an uncomfortable association with the trajectory of conflicts, only in the 1990s have the specific linkages become a policy issue of ongoing debate." Besides efforts towards conflict prevention, humanitarian interventions in situations of human rights abuse and post-conflict peacebuilding became part of international policy of global management in the post-Cold War period (Tschirgi, 2003:4).

The transition from relief-development trajectory to peacebuilding has been intertwined as an alternating process, and not necessarily chronological in nature. This means that there are NGOs that have been providing relief and development assistance while still engaged in peacebuilding activities. Lewis (2202:373) identifies three factors that have led to increased NGO participation in peacebuilding: the realization by international donors that governments did not have the capacity to undertake development programmes; recognition of NGOs as alternative implementers of the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the western nations on their southern counterparts; and appreciation of civil society's capacity to resist dictatorial governments in both Eastern Europe and Latin America.

The renewed consciousness of globalization and increased role of civil society in national and international politics has further brought NGOs into the limelight. Civil society is a broader term that includes NGOs and can generally be defined as an interactive group of organizations and institutions that are loosely networked for a common social purpose.[23] Howell and Pearce (2002:4) hold that civil society was viewed in 1980s and 1990s from a neo-liberalists perspective by western donor countries as a positive channel to democratic and developmental change in governments in the global South. This means that NGOs as part of the larger civil society can be seen to be "mediators between particularistic norms and global governance/globalization" (Richmond, 2010a:28). NGOs thus create a space for resistance to authoritative and hegemonic powers, and have been at the forefront of human rights advocacy, development and social change. However, the donors' reification of NGOs as key agents of democracy and development can subvert the power of the state (Howell and Pearce, 2002:3) and undermine processes of change.

The literature on the role of NGOs in peacebuilding generally identifies several broad areas of potential NGO intervention. These include: human rights advocacy especially for the marginalized populations affected by conflict; capacity building in increasing the participation of the affected population for change; conflict mediation and resolution especially at community level; advocacy for integrated approaches to conflict intervention; development

[23] A more elaborate definition is given in the *Global Civil Society Year Book* as the "sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organisations, networks, and individuals located *between* the family, the state, and the market and operating *beyond* the confines of national societies, polities, and economies" (Anheier et al., 2001:17). ANHEIER, H., GLASIUS, M. & KALDOR, M. 2001. Introducing Global Civil Society. *In:* ANHEIER, H., GLASIUS, M. & KALDOR, M. (eds.) *Global Civil Society 2001.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

activities and provision of basic needs that help in attaining post-conflict recovery; supporting institutionalization of democracy, governance and just structures (Carey, 2010; Fitzduff and Church, 2004; Richmond and Carey, 2005; Aall, 1996; Anderson, 1996; Opongo, 2006; Goodhand, 2002). To some extent, NGOs' involvement in peacebuilding has been attributed to the failure of the states in resolving conflicts (Richmond, 2010a:25) and creating sustainable environments for security, development and harmonious co-existence.

There are a number of challenges that face NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict context. These could include the complex nature of the post-conflict contexts, multiple actors in the conflict terrain, lack of NGO experience in peacebuilding and limited resources. NGO peacebuilding is constrained by the challenge of maintaining neutrality in the face of evil; prolonging war by providing aid both to those in need, and the militias who might use it to foster a war agenda; engaging in short-term peacebuilding activities that could exacerbate conflict; co-opting NGOs into the liberal peace agenda which may not ensure a sustainable peace; compromising the NGO identity by the diverse nature of the NGO category, which has included illiberal organizations that have been known to promote violence (Carey, 2010:240-256; Goodhand, 2006; Anderson, 1999).

Part II: Operational Context of NGO Peacebuilding and Liberal Peace Agenda

The operational context of NGO peacebuilding has mostly been defined within the perspectives of post-conflict reconstruction. This operational context has been characterized by the global concerns over how to deal with insurgencies, warlords, terrorist groups, transitions to democracy and international response

to global threats on peace (Davies, 2003; Kennedy, 2004; Paris, 2004a). Subsequently, global security, democracy and protection of human rights have been prioritized as key components of peacebuilding. This approach to peacebuilding, mainly fronted by western nations, has been criticized as promoting liberal peace (Cooper et al, 2011; Heathershaw, 2008).

Liberal peace is viewed as a political and military process of promoting human rights, liberalized economies, the rule of law and democracy (Duffield, 2010; Richmond, 2009b; Heathershaw, 2008; Chandler, 2004). It is however important to note that the proponents of liberal peace do not refer to the practice of post-conflict peacebuilding as *liberal peace*. In essence the term *liberal peace* is more of a conceptual description than a normative consensus by the practitioners of post-conflict peacebuilding. The term captures the *liberal* perspectives of the post-conflict peace activities as promoting neo-liberal ideals of democracy, human rights, liberalized economies and the rule of law.

Richmond and Franks (2007:29) assert that the primary objective of liberal peace is to ensure "a self-sustaining peace within domestic, regional and international settings, in which both overt and structural violence are removed" while social, economic and political models are eschewed to conform to international liberalism. In this perspective, liberal peace aims at promoting four kinds of peace (Richmond and Franks, 2007): *victor's peace* based on a realist viewpoint that peace is achieved through military victory; *institutional peace* which commits states to multilateral legal norms that bind their actions and behaviour. This view is mostly held by idealists, liberal internationalist and liberal institutionalists; *constitutional peace* developed from liberal Kantian

argument that peace is achieved through democracy, free trade and a composite of cosmopolitan values enshrined in the notion that individuals ought to be seen as an end in the themselves, and not a means to an end (Doyle, 1983)[24]; *civil peace* which focuses on the defence of human rights, advocacy, mobilization and participation of civil society in global governance.

Liberal peace, according to Richmond and Franks (2007:30), portrays three models of peacebuilding: first, the *conservative model* that takes a top-down approach to peacebuilding and development, which is often seen to be external, coercive and hegemonic. Second, the *orthodox model* in which international actors tend to be sensitive to local situations and hence engage into dialogical and consensual processes with the local community in order to find a middle ground. This approach is adopted by the UN, and "equates to a balanced multilateral and still state-centric peace" (Richmond and Franks, 2007:30). Third, the *emancipatory model* which is a bottom-up approach that seeks local consent with full ownership of the peacebuilding process while critical of external international impositions, conditionalities and dependencies expressed in the conservative and orthodox models. These models demonstrate that liberal peace is externally driven with the intention of 'stabilizing' states towards democracy and local participation.

The above liberal peace perspectives have had an impact on the role of NGOs in peacebuilding. NGOs have been seen as one of the key agents of change in post-conflict reconstruction leading to concerns over the risk of them losing their

[24] Doyle is referenced by Richmond and Frank (2007) as holding the idea that 'constitutional peace' promotes cosmopolitan values.

independence and being co-opted into the western agenda of securitization of conflict zones (Mac Ginty, 2008; Richmond, 2005a; Goodhand, 2006). I will elaborate these aspects in more detail in the next sections.

I will now discuss the human security concept that defines operational conceptual framework of the liberal peace approach. The critics of liberal peace assert that liberal peace is founded on the conceptual framework of human security which is characterized by the humanitarian responsibility to intervene in conflicts, particularly in situation of grave human rights abuse and threat to global security; post-conflict reconstruction through statebuilding; and promotion of development (Duffield, 2007; Paris, 2002; Pugh and Cooper, 2004a; Richmond, 2005b). I have already explained in the First Chapter the normative background to the post-conflict peacebuilding approach that was elaborated in the UN's *Agenda for peace*.

The concept of human security, though not new, has been emphasized in a different way from the post-Cold War perception of the security of state against aggression and safeguarding of state interest in foreign policy. In the 1990s the emphasis in post-conflict reconstruction was placed on economic and social reconstruction leaving out sensitive political issues of building up a self-sustaining local state capacity that could provide security for citizens and states (Hänggi, 2005:4). The new approach to human security emphasizes the security of individuals in a manner that defends human rights and promotes sustainable development. [25]

[25] The 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report* made a broader elaboration on human security beyond the security of states and individuals to include "economic, food, health, environmental,

The 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, dictatorial regimes in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Cote d'Ivoire, to cite but a few, have all raised questions about the global responsibility to protect civilians from armed conflict. Global criticisms of inaction by the international community to end genocide, and the subsequent admission by the world nations of their complacency have shifted the debate from whether there were sufficient moral and legitimate justifications for intervention against the above cases to debates on whether interventions should be carried out in extreme cases of human rights violations (Seybolt, 2007:50). These situations have introduced the agenda of human security as central to post-conflict reconstruction activities.

The above historical atrocities of human rights abuses have led to the prioritization of individual and group rights against state sovereignty. Sovereignty has been defined as responsibility to protect citizens from harm (Hunt and Bellamy, 2011; Bellamy, 2009). Restriction on sovereignty implies its transformation and affirms its non-absoluteness (Forsythe, 2000:188), subsequently paving way to the moral imperative of defending human dignity. This responsibility to protect human lives has also been extended to the global community under the auspices of the UN, which I discuss below. The UN adopted the resolution of *Responsibility to Protect* at the 2005 UN World Summit (Bellamy, 2009:2). This concept underlines the UN responsibility to prevent conflicts, intervene in conflict and rebuild nations coming out of conflict

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personal, community and political security" (Krause and Jütersonke, 2005:456). This perspective has led to securitization of the processes of peacebuilding under the broader framework of liberal peace. KRAUSE, K. & JÜTERSONKE, O. 2005. Peace, Security and Development in Post-Conflict Environments. *Security Dialogue,* 36**,** 447-462.

(Bellamy, 2009:3). This is more or less in line with the UN *Agenda for Peace.* Hoffman (1996) argues that the *empirical revolution* of interdependence and globalization that subjects states to the global order, on the one hand, and the *normative revolution* that checks on sovereignty and restricts a state's right of independent internal operation, on the other, have brought sovereignty to accountability. Thus, the acknowledged moral good of sovereignty must yield to superior imperatives of global peace.

The post September 11th era has brought in a new dimension of state security, conceptualization of peace and its implementation. The emphasis has been put on achieving global security through eradication of terrorist networks and conditions that favour their development. However, this approach of maintaining global order through militarized and liberalized peace has had serious shortcomings on the conceptualization of peace and its implementation.[26]

Within this UN framework distinctions have been made between peacekeeping, peacemaking, peace enforcement and peacebuilding. *Peacekeeping* has mainly been used to refer to military interventions to keep armed groups apart and safeguard the peace negotiation process. Barakat et al (2002:3) term this approach to intervention as *armed and pacific*, meaning that the UN forces are

[26] The anti-terror campaigns have compromised rights of individuals and states suspected to be part of the terrorist networks. Ken Roth (2002), the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch (HRW) observes that "for too many countries, the anti-terror mantra has provided a new reason to ignore human rights." The HRW (2002) in its 2002 World Report raises serious concerns over the violations of the rights of alleged suspects of terrorism. These situations threaten to water down the historical gains that have been achieved so far by fostering human rights principles. HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 2002. 2002 World Report. New York: Human Rights Watch. Available at: http://www.hrw.org/wr2k2/ (Accessed on 5 Sept. 2010); ROTH, K. 2002. New Global Survey finds Crackdown on Civil Liberties. New York: Human Rights Watch. Available at: http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/01/wr2002.htm (Accessed 4 Sept. 2010).

armed but do not apply military force, and instead monitor peace processes. *Peacemaking* puts focus on the content of conflict and emphasizes the resolution of conflict through third party negotiation, persuasive use of power by force and the rule of law. *Peace enforcement* is more or less in line with peacemaking, but gives a clear mandate to the UN led military to use force for self-defence. Barakat et al (2002:3) identify this last one as *armed and coercive* approach based on the use of "force against one of the parties in favour of the other or in favour of part of the population." This is part of conflict management processes that seek to end conflicts.

Post-conflict peacebuilding in liberal peace conceptualization has been linked to the promotion of democracy through popular participation in governance system; securitisation of development and developmentalization of security (Willett, 2005:570) under the thesis that poverty and underdevelopment create conditions of insecurity that can lead to organized crimes and terrorist activities. Hence, aid is tied to securitization of unstable countries. Economic development has also been linked to liberalization of economies that opens markets to investors as part of state reconstruction (Newman, 2009; Duffield, 2010). The liberal peace conceptualization is partially inspired by modernization theory that expects states in conflict to evolve into full-fledged economic, political and social stability.

A different perspective to peacebuilding and maintenance of global order has been advanced by the *International Criminal Court* (ICC) as a means of addressing post-conflict crimes and ending impunity. The ICC has the mandate of ending impunity, reinstating the rule of law and protecting civilian rights. The

institution of the Nuremberg criminal court after the Second World War, International Humanitarian Law, the Genocide Convention of 1948, the Torture Convention of 1984, and *Responsibility to Protect* of 2005, among other human rights laws and conventions, have made a strong point that there should be no impunity over crimes committed. Though marked with imperfection of the 'justice of the victors', the Nuremberg initiative was a worthwhile attempt to set standards for accountability and responsibility for the maintenance of global order and peace.[27] The Nuremberg Court prosecuted crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The preamble of the ICC (1999) Rome Statute sets the tone for its objective; it calls for "an end to impunity" and emphasizes the state duty to "exercise its criminal jurisdiction over those responsible for international crimes." Article 5 of the ICC Statute identifies four classes of crimes, namely, the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.

The Rome Statute has however, not defined the crime of aggression, which at Nuremberg was referred to as a crime against peace. The ICC does not have jurisdiction over such crimes until a definition is agreed upon by the international community.[28] The ICC initiative, though still at its embryonic stages, is certainly

[27] Unfortunately, the post-Nuremberg period took more than fifty years before an International Criminal Court (ICC) was instituted in Rome 1998. This was largely due to the Cold War and its repercussions on the world order. The end of the Cold War in 1990 marked a new era of accountability following the institution of International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

[28] It is important to recall the fact that it took twenty years for the United Nations to agree on the definition of the term "aggression".

a noble effort towards a more effective international justice and global order despite the current technical shortcomings. Given that in most cases "political calculation precedes reference to legal rules" (Forsythe, 2000:85) the effectiveness of this Court will depend on the states' deliberate choice between human destiny on the one hand, and political sovereignty and interests, on the other.

The development of human rights into a normative fundamental principle has been limited by various factors ranging from conditional sovereignty to the differentiations in cultural and political emphasis by different countries. One cannot dismiss the 'eternal' debate on the universalism of these rights, the westernization baggage, the international hypocrisy in the implementation process as well as the lack of what Falk (2000:155) refers to as "intercivilization participation." A "normative adjustment" would be an appropriate attempt to facilitate an intercivilizational inclusion of marginalized cultures (Falk, 2000:153).

Combining *Responsibility to Protect* and ICC objectives in a liberal peace conceptualization would require "nimble and comprehensive peace process, focused protection initiatives, and clear and impartial multilateral punishment for perpetrating mass atrocities" (Prendergast and Rogoff, 2008:5). Finding a balance between liberal legal frameworks and realist interests that dominate global politics, remains an enormous challenge for sovereign states and international institutions.

Part III: Critique of Liberal Peace

The above liberal peace approaches to human security as a conceptual framework for peacebuilding and maintenance of the global order have been criticized by a number of authors (Paris, 2004a; Richmond, 2010b; Mac Ginty, 2010; Pugh and Cooper, 2004; Pugh et al., 2008; Duffield, 2007). As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the primary objective of my analysis is to establish the extent to which NGO peacebuilding serves the liberal peace agenda. In this section I will focus on the various critiques that have been advanced against liberal peace while incorporating the implications on NGO peacebuilding.

The main points of contention by the above critics of liberal peace have been that liberal peace approach to peacebuilding reflects an extension of the western hegemonic powers over developing nations; executes a top-down approach that does not take into consideration local processes of peace; co-opts NGOs into the agenda of western nations; limits peacebuilding processes to state-building by promoting democracy, liberalized economies and the rule of law; subsumes the human security concept to the agenda of securitization of the human existence at development, peacebuilding and state-building levels. These elaborations point to the fact that liberal peace has become the defining framework for what should constitute post-conflict reconstruction (Richmond and Carey, 2005:29).

There are major limitations in the application and implementation of liberal peace, and in most cases it is not as smooth as it is often presented (Richmond, 2006). Chandler (2008b:431) has made three main critiques of the human

security approach to peacebuilding, which falls under the broader liberal peace definition: first is that there has been a general exaggeration of the security threat in the post cold war period, hence justifying the political interests rather than "ethical normative challenge" (Chandler, 2008b:431). Duffield holds the view that perceived security threats by western countries have led to containment policies that confine post-conflict states within their borders by offering tokens in line of: "poverty reduction, conditional debt cancellation and selective funding" (Duffield, 2005:157). [29]

Second, the agenda of human security is skewed to exercise power on the developing world as the place of political instability, and hence global security threat (Taylor, 2010; Willett, 2005). This has justified the implementation of the motivations of both realists and liberalists in enforcing liberal peace as a norm of governance for the problematized non-western states deemed as 'failed states'. This subsequently re-creates an existential meaning to the western states which have "lost their sense of purpose and social connection" (Chandler, 2008: 468).

Third, the emphasis on urgency for intervention justifies short term solutions to more complex problems. In order to address the root causes of conflict and develop mechanisms of conflict management and accountability in governance,

[29] The containment has been extended to the control of migration from southern to northern hemisphere (Duffield, 2010:62). This means that development of global South has been juxtaposed with the creation of anti-migration fortresses in the global North (Duffield, 2010:63). The expectation is that these policies would confine any security threats within the state; improve the economy and democratic participation; and limit any insurgencies that could be a threat to the region. This approach, Richmond (2009:57) argues, "tends to construct a form of peace bounded by territorial sovereignty, therefore re-creating states." DUFFIELD, M. 2010. The Liberal Way of Development and the Developmental - Security Impasse: Exploring the Global Life-Chance Divide. *Security Dialogue,* 41**,** 53-76; RICHMOND, O. P. 2009b. Beyond liberal peace? Responses to "backsliding". *In:* NEWMAN, E., PARIS, R. & RICHMOND, O. P. (eds.) *New Perspectives in Liberal Peace.* Tokyo: United Nations University Press.

one would have to make long term commitments. Most military interventions are expensive and therefore limited in resources and time.

The conceptualization and practice of human security has been criticized as lacking in political strategy (Tadjbakhsh, 2010:118). This means that while the concepts of *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P) and the *European Union doctrine for Human Security* (2004) place ethical responsibility on international community to protect individuals where states have failed or are unwilling to protect them, they however ignore the importance of political deconstruction of the politics of securitization and militarized peacebuilding. It is important that the moral discourse to protect vulnerable individuals should not be used to usurp the powers of the state. The focus should be geared towards internal moral responsibility to govern through just and participative structures, rather than focusing on conditions for intervention alone.

The liberal peace approach is constructed within the framework of power relationships between states. From this viewpoint, liberal peace can be seen as promoting "hegemonic international liberalism" (Tadjbakhsh, 2010:118). The bottom-up guise turns peace into a "form of biopower, which involves interveners in conflict taking on the role of 'administering life'" (Richmond, 2005: 29). The northern states have been analyzed as imposing their agenda on the states in the southern hemisphere. Pugh et al (2008: 390) assert that: "The political economy of post-conflict peace and statebuilding in a liberal peace framework has involved simulacra of empowerment where peacebuilders transfer responsibility to societies without transferring power." This assertion implies that NGOs have sometimes subjected societies to constructed concepts

of peacebuilding along the lines of liberal peace without seeking ways of integrating these new concepts to existing systems of governance as well as cultural values.

Chandler (2008b) describes human security as 'a dog that did not bark'. His critique is based on the fact that the human security proponents never took into account the aspect of power relations rendering the concept susceptible to cooptation by the political elite.[30] Subsequently, it is the "universalist interest of power rather than cosmopolitan ethics of empowerment that drive the discourse of human security" (Chandler, 2008a:468). In a similar line of argument, Rogers (2008b) makes the critique that the West has failed in its statebuilding efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan; the terrorist cells continue to spread; the population remains the highest casualty; and the US interests in oil and economic gains seem to dominate the war on terror agenda. Rogers (2008b) underscores that the West should instead focus on addressing global economic divisions and environmental concerns.

However, Tadjbakhsh (2010:120-122) suggests that it is important not to maintain a narrow perspective on power and instead look at the bigger picture of ending human suffering and impunity. The primary focus ought to be on the moral imperative to save human lives and restore human dignity. This ought to be a universal approach, regardless of whether these violations are carried out in the developing or western countries. Considering the problems of the South

[30] In making this elaboration I borrow a cue from Tadjbakhsh (2010:117). TADJBAKHSH, S. 2010. Human Security and the Legitimation. *In:* RICHMOND, O. P. (ed.) *Palgrave advances in peacebuilding.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

as easily solved by a liberal peace approach is to ignore the moral imperative and the universality of the concerns of human security, whether in the South or in the North. Besides, the North has also been victim of the liberal peace policies. For example, the recent economic crisis that led to recession in western countries and subsequent high inflation and loss of jobs have been attributed to uncontrolled liberal peace policies of economic liberalization.

Liberal peace holds a flawed argument based on the principle of 'democratic peace' which asserts that democracies do not fight each other, sponsor terrorist acts or carry out ethnic cleansing (Diamond, 1995). This view ignores the fact that liberal democracies, in their effort to 'democratize' illiberal societies have often been violent themselves (Newman et al., 2009:11). Such has been the case in military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, among others (Rogers, 2008a, 2008b; Duffield, 2008; Pugh and Cooper, 2004b).

Liberal peace is also critiqued to be a state-building project in the post-conflict context. This is attributed to the fact that the western policy makers "have difficulty imagining any other form of viable political community than the state as it is understood in the West" (Williams, 2010:60). Paris (2009:101-102) refers to this as *mission civilisatrice* whereby "external actors have sought to refashion the domestic structures of weaker societies in accordance with prevailing notions of 'good' or 'civilized governance..." For example, peacekeeping has taken a liberal peace dimension within state-building conceptualization: monitoring elections, policing, human rights monitoring and liberalized economies. This combination has become "the new imagery of peace in the

minds of many policy makers, peace and conflict researchers alike" (Richmond, 2010a:22).

Different aspects of state-building and political management have been controlled by external actors through the use of "consensual and punitive strategies" (Richmond, 2010a:22). This has led to the conceptualization of "peace-as-governance" (Richmond, 2010a:25). The UN, according to Doyle (1997:2), has reduced peacebuilding to state-building and "has become involved in renovating and rebuilding – or building for the first time - the basic structures of the state, while in yet other cases the UN has even substituted for the state."[31] Chandler (2006) in his description of an *empire in denial,* is emphatic that the western nations are in denial of the fact that they have skewed their hegemonic state-building agenda to 'civilize' and 'tame' the violent nations.

The ICC is seen as one of the hegemonic agendas to 'civilize' conflict societies. As such, the ICC is an extension of the liberal peace agenda within the transitional justice framework that puts emphasis on the rule of law (Sriram, 2009). In a similar perspective, Jackson (2009:320) holds the view that the ICC is "an expression of liberal views of universal human rights that seek to protect the individual from justice that is the sole preserve of the state. This expression of human rights is at the very core of liberal peace theories of post-conflict

[31] For example in the refugee camp settings, the camps have become extra-territorial space managed by humanitarian regimes such as the UN, creating what Slaughter and Crisp (2008) have referred to as 'surrogate states'- that is, states within a state. SLAUGHTER, A. & CRISP, J. 2008. A Surrogate State? The Role of UNHCR in Protracted Refugee Situations. *In:* LOESCHER, G., MILNER, J., NEWMAN, E. & TROELLER, G. (eds.) *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications.* New York: UN University Press.

reconstruction." Such externalized approaches could signal importation of governance values that may not be coherent to the local context.

Liberal peace is also ontologically incoherent and does not seem to hold a common understanding on the kind of peace it aims to achieve (Richmond, 2009b:61). This adds to the confusion about the lack of clear indicators on the kind of peace that liberal peace proponents aim to achieve. Hughes (2009:219) discusses the incongruence between liberal peace conceptualization of the society in contractual terms based on individualistic perception of state-society relationship, and the local understanding that is often communitarian. In post-conflict settings "people quite frequently frame their political goals in terms of getting hold of resources that were previously denied to them; and frame their strategies in terms of collective action" (Hughes, 2009:219) founded on trust and loyalty rather than individual interests. The trust and confidence building based on human and social capital is vital for the attainment of "peace capital" as part of the peace sustainability agenda (MacGinty, 2010:40; Peirce and Stubbs, 2000).

Liberal peace can be susceptible to cooptation by the local community "particularly where one group can adopt the language of liberal peace and has strong support and credibility within, and from, the international community" (Richmond and Franks, 2007:81). This can lead to conflicts and tensions between different peacebuilding groups, hence undermining peace activities. Post-conflict peacebuilding under the framework of liberal peace is therefore not neutral: early demands for democratic elections can exacerbate conflicts in divided societies; economic liberalization and capitalism could marginalize the

poor and create new grievances; opening up to the influences of globalization could further render states more fragile (Snyder, 2000; Paris, 2004b). Citizens in post-conflict settings often struggle to survive under high rates of poverty, poor living conditions, insecurity and unemployment while at the same time expected to participate in the liberal peace agenda of democracy and economic liberalization (Richmond, 2009b:67).

Post-conflict peacebuilding is inherently complex and ought to be undertaken in consultation with the contextual imperatives (Hänggi, 2005:12). Given these complexities peacebuilding has to be multi-dimensional bringing together security, political (governance) and socio-economic dimensions as demonstrated in Table 2 below (Hänggi, 2005:12).

Table 2 **Peacebuilding as a Multidimensional Process** (Hänggi, 2005)

Security dimension	DDR of Ex-Combattants Mine Action Control of Weapons (particularly SALW[32]) SSR[33]
Political Dimension	Support for Political and Administrative Authorities and structures Good Governance, Democracy and Human Rights Civil Society Empowerment Reconciliation Transitional Justice
Socio-economic Dimension	Repatriation and Reintegration of Refugees & Internally Displaced Persons Reconstruction of Infrastructure and Important Public Functions Development of Education and Health Private Sector Development, Employment, Trade and Investment

[32] SALW refers to small arms and light weapons

[33] SSR refers to Security Sector Reform

The above table demonstrates that in order to achieve sustainable socio-economic development it is important to guarantee security of individuals and society; put in place accountable political institutions; facilitate political development through security and improved standards of living; and institute political and socio-economic development to attain long term security (Hänggi, 2005:12). Societies emerging out of conflict tend have high expectations on their governments, and in some cases the failure to meet these expectations can lead to a relapse to war. Paris (2004:187) cautions that rushing to political reforms without putting in place an institutionalization process that aims at stabilizing post-conflict countries, makes these countries vulnerable to further conflicts. In other words, institutionalization before liberalization is fundamental to the success of liberal peace.

In a drastic twist against liberal peace critics, Paris (2010:340) underscores that the liberal peace critics ought to admit that there is currently no alternative to the liberal peace and that efforts should be geared towards improving its applied approaches rather than dismissing it entirely. He thus notes that:

> "While the turn to critical theory in this field has generated important insights over the past decade, nothing in the recent critical literature provides a convincing rationale for abandoning liberal peacebuilding or replacing it with a non-liberal or 'post-liberal' alternative. The literature does, however, reinforce the case for reforming current approaches to peacebuilding, without disavowing the broadly liberal orientation of these missions"

This view has generated criticism notably by Cooper et al (2011) who observe that Paris' confining position fails to note the common prescriptions of liberal peacebuilding, particularly in political economy. They assert that these prescriptions "neither take sufficient account of local needs and agency, nor

reflect on the role of global capitalism" (Cooper et al, 2011:6) and economic policies that create or sustain conflicts. Besides, there have been noted inconsistencies in the way in which human rights and democracy have been compromised for hegemonic interests. The authors cite as example, the pursuit of oil in the Middle East, central Asia and Africa that led to the partnering of the liberal peace proponents with autocratic governments (Cooper et al, 2011:3). As an alternative approach to liberal peace, Cooper et al (2011:11) suggest a welfare approach that incorporates the wellbeing of the individual and community within the political economy of peacebuilding. In order to realize this objective it would be important to have government policies in place that can protect internal economies and reform global structures.

Pugh (2000:5) proposes the broadening and redefinition of peacebuilding to include "associative engagement between internal and external actors." Further, Pugh et al (2008:394) suggest a paradigm shift that adapts unsecuritized language, which takes into account the needs of the local people, "rejects universalism in favour of heterodoxy, reconceptualises the abstract individual as a social being and limits damage to planet life – in short, a 'life-welfare' perspective." This will subsequently lead to "two-fold paradigm shift: from the 'liddism'[34] of liberal peace to political economies of life welfare: and from universalist panaceas (which results in dysfunctional hybrid forms of political economy) to engaging with heterogeneity" (Pugh et al., 2008:394). In a similar view, Tadjbakhsh (2010:123) proposes an "emancipatory human security

[34] The 'liddism' concept is taken from Rogers (2010) who describes it as a strategy of putting lids on pressing issues by applying "intense effort to develop new tactics and technologies that can avert problems and suppress them should they arise." ROGERS, P. 2010. Beyond "liddism": towards real global security. Open Democracy http://www.opendemocracy.net (Accessed 27 July 2011).

approach" that makes a critical analysis of hegemony and ideology behind liberal peace, and gives legitimacy to human security.

The shift here is towards a more integrative approach that takes into account the local dynamics, develops negotiations at different levels and aims at politics of emancipation that integrates human needs, sustainable political economies and harmonious co-existence with the environment (Salih, 2009:135; Pugh et al., 2008:395). However, these suggested alternatives lack an operational framework that would be entirely detached from some of the liberal peace perspectives. It is important to analyse the local solutions within the bigger picture of the global dynamics.

Part IV: NGO Peacebuilding and 'Liberal Peace'

NGOs have been analyzed by the liberal peace critics as essential agents of the agenda of the western nations' conceptualization of peacebuilding within the hegemonic framework of global securitization. The suggestion is that conceptual emphasis by liberal peace proponents on the mantra 'peace-as-governance' has co-opted NGOs into the liberal peace agenda (Richmond, 2005a:20). Allegedly, NGOs have become the frontline actors of what Duffield (2008) refers to as "modern imperialism." The post Cold War agenda of the western nations to converge agendas for peace research, conflict resolution and conflict management approaches within the liberal peace framework has identified NGOs as one of the key implementing agents (Richmond, 2010a:21-22).

Goodhand (2006:78-79) argues that there have been two different interpretations of the NGO engagement in peacebuilding within new human security paradigm. One interpretation held by the liberals is that NGOs can contribute to peacebuilding activities by the virtue of their grassroots involvement in humanitarian activities. The other is that western interventionism has mainly been geared towards the rogue states that have failed the democracy test (Duffield, 2007; Paris, 2002; Pugh and Cooper, 2004a). These are seen as attempts to quarantine war (Richads, 2005:3) while promoting liberal peace agenda. In this sense, NGOs are viewed in the same continuum as subjects of liberal peace because it is difficult to separate their humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities from the new security regime of the western nations (Duffield, 2001:16).

Liberal peace approach has led to a "peacebuilding consensus" which has been adapted by international actors, UN, International Financial Institutions (IFS) and NGOs (Richmond, 2010a:22). In a similar observation Goodhand (2006:84) asserts that NGOs have become primary agents of peace, leading to "privatization of peace building" (Goodhand, 2006 :84). To *privatize peace* means confining its ontological conceptualization, interpretation and practice within a given framework, in this case, liberal peace. Thus, international NGOs have "colonized the 'peacebuilding' space without any convincing demonstration of their comparative advantage" (Peirce and Stubbs, 2000:173). Richmond (2008:5) cautions that the "camouflaging of the subjective nature of peace disguises ideology, hegemony, dividing practices and marginalization." As a result NGOs have been co-opted to building "civil peace…along with parallel

construction of 'constitutional' peace (through democratization) and the institutional peace (associated with the UN system)" (Richmond, 2005a:18).

The role that NGOs play in liberal peace is generally contested. On the one hand, the realist-positivist perception is that NGOs have a vital role to play in state-building but this is on condition that they be monitored by intergovernmental institutions (Richmond, 2005a:21). On the other hand there are those who argue that "a global civil society has now transcended state control and represents a cosmopolitan desire for human security" (Richmond, 2005a:21). The influence of NGOs can however not be underestimated. NGOs have contributed to the construction and conceptualization of the global governance, globalization perspectives, and international networks as a means for advocating for liberal reforms at different levels (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

The differentiation between the local and the state or international interventions is prevalent in the liberal peace literature (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2009a; Taylor, 2010). This literature examines diverse aspects such as: the extent to which the 'local' is marginalized by external peace interventions; the vital role of the 'local' in peace processes; and the possible cooption of the liberal peace by the 'local'. The 'local' or community is often romanticized as naïve, lacking in knowledge and susceptible to externalized processes of change (Richmond, 2011; Richmond, 2009a). These approaches ignore the everyday life of the local and at the same time deny the local agency leading to imposition of liberal peace (Richmond, 2011:95). The local is also viewed as pristine, original and genuine. It is however important to develop welfare systems that do not romanticize the local as being perpetually on the margins of humanitarian

assistance, but as legitimate agents of social economic transformation in post-conflict settings (Taylor, 2010:158). There are also dilemmas on how to approach the question of the local ownership of peace processes: the disintegration of the social, economic and political structures in the post-conflict situation may necessitate an external intervention; the 'local' can be manipulated by the local elite subsequently marginalizing the larger local community; the hybrid cooperation can lead to positive results (Narten, 2009:256-257). These perspectives show that it is important to undertake a careful consideration on the interventions in order to achieve the maximum good.

Allegedly, the governability by NGOs is controlled by the maintenance of differentiation between the local and the state/international in order to give relevance to the hegemonic power despite the fact that these powers undermine the consent of local people (Richmond, 2005:29). This process often implies the importation of 'expert' into the local context, hence producing a pre-designed governability. The 'expertise' is based on "institutional imperatives and pseudo-scientific models of society and social change" (Krause and Jütersonke, 2005:459) which ignore the local knowledge. This implies that NGOs have changed their activities to match the goals of the donors while ignoring the needs of the people on the ground (Reimann, 2005:43). In a further analysis, Hickey (2002:843) observes that even when NGOs claim to be closer to the people through participatory approaches, they still maintain a "clientelistic and exclusive" relationship rather than an "inclusive and empowering" participation. A similar perspective is held by Kaufman (2002: 202) who asserts that liberal

peacemaking in civil conflicts heavily relies on “rationalist paradigm” that often fails to capture the complexities of localized conflicts.

In an attempt to harmonize the liberal peace approach (supported by NGOs and western nations) and indigenous (read ‘local’) peacebuilding, MacGinty (2011;2010;2008) proposes hybrid peacebuilding, which is a synthesis of the best out of the two approaches. He asserts that the ‘local’ has agency and hence “ability to hybridise the liberal peace by enforcing some change on it” (Mac Ginty, 2011:84). This hybrid approach has also been proposed by different authors (Richmond, 2010b; Ishkanian, 2006; Pugh et al., 2008). For example, in their critique of the approach to state-building held by the liberal peace proponents, Brown et al (2010:100) propose “hybrid political orders” that combine governance strategies of governments and that of indigenous communities. They acknowledge the tensions at different levels of the hybrid combination but insist that sustainable peace lies in a multidimensional convergence, and not in the state-building approach, which misconstrues “key dimensions of the nature of political community” (Brown et al., 2010:100). If such a multi-dimensional view is not embraced, attempts for conflict intervention could be seen as geared towards pacification (John, 2005:12).

The heavy dependence on donor funding by NGOs has been criticized by a number of authors as subjecting the latter to the agenda of the former (Carey, 2010; Tvedt, 1998; Baitenmann, 1990). Tvedt (2006) underlines the importance of taking a broader perspective to analyzing the leverage and power relations discourse in NGO-donor interaction. He observes that international aid system

has created new power relations supported by the globalization forces, subsequently instituting "particular moral, cultural and conceptual power" that justifies itself globally (Tvedt, 2006: 682). Within this framework, NGO international engagement continues to generate similar paradigms of power relations and create dominant world views.

Hattori (2003) warns that "the institutionalization of giving can work to ethically *legitimize* a material order, recasting the material hierarchy between donor and recipient as moral order." For example, the international aid system promotes capital accumulation and perpetuates the capitalist agenda, subsequently "transnationalizing social relations of giving" (Hattori 2003: 164). Neo-Gramscian theorists, borrowing from Gramscian cultural hegemony concept, push the argument further to assert that such unreciprocated-gift-relationship lead to *ethical hegemony* (Augelli and Murphy, 1993) that circumvents the recipient's consent. The recipient agencies are thus subjected to what Corrigan and Sayer (1985) call *moral regulation*,[35] disciplining the recipient to conform to the prescribed conditionality of aid, such as accountability, good governance, democracy and marketization.

The above literature criticizes NGOs as promoting liberal peacebuilding agenda. However, these assertions need contextual validation. Criticisms coupled with

[35] Corrigan and Sayer (1985:4) define moral regulation as "a project of normalising, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word 'obvious', what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order." They originally used this term as a critique on the16th century social transformation of England which reconstituted the peasants as free labourers in the new capitalist order. CORRIGAN, P. & DEREK, S. 1985. *The Great Arch: English State Formation As Cultural Revolution.* New York: Basil Blackwell.

anecdotal evidences are not enough. The extent to which NGO peacebuilding is co-opted by the liberal peace ought to be verified by experiences of peacebuilding on the ground and the changes that the affected people have witnessed.

Part V: Beyond the Liberal Peace Critique: Identifying the Gaps in the Literature

The liberal peace literature has made normative generalization on NGOs, post-conflict contexts, donor governments and local community without recognizing the divergences and convergences within these entitities. The archetypal assumptions have led to generalized critique without assessing the existing distinctions between them. Borrowing a cue from Greenwood and Hinings (1993:1052) I would say that liberal peace critics have limited the understanding of the above entities to archetypal abstructions in two different perspectives: first by examining the organizational structures and systems of operation based on analysis of the general patterns rather than specifics. This is based on a “holistic” approach (Miller and Friesen, 1984) that studies NGOs as a single body with similar characteristics. The second is based on the analysis of ideas, ideologies and values that offer an "interpretive scheme" (Ranson et al., 1980). In other words, the liberal peace critics have based their critiques on systems, structures, and organizational values of international peacebuilding on a single interpretive scheme (*liberal* peace) without examining diverse contextual, organizational, governmental and other phenomenal manifestations. These two archetypal abstructions above expose limitations of the liberal peace critiques.

There are therefore a number of critiques that can be advanced against the liberal peace critics who assert that NGO peacebuilding is solely a component of the liberal peace agenda. The *first* is that there are gaps in the NGO research that have limited the extent to which generalization made by the liberal peace critics are valid. The above literature of liberal peace critique lacks clarification on the identity boundaries of the NGOs. Thus, NGOs have been discussed as an amorphous entity without distinction of the variations in identity, origin, mandate, resources, leadership and contextual experiences. Different NGOs can be categorized under broader thematic issues like: human rights, advocacy, emergencies and relief, conflict resolution (both research-based and field-based), academic activists, resource mobilization and development. NGOs can also be said to be faith-based, intergovernmental, governmental or public-funded, independent, local or international, etc. At the same time, within these categorizations there would be several other sub-categorizations. Acknowledging this broader diversity would limit simplistic analysis of the NGOs (Anderson, 1996; Aall, 1996) based on general assertions.

Some of the terms used to refer to NGOs have also undergone various transformations that would be important to note. For example, in the 1990s the term 'civil society' strongly emerged to include NGOs as propagators of justice, peace, democracy and emancipation (Tvedt 2006:679). Thus, civil society was juxtaposed against the state, further creating unfavourable climate for any research on state-NGOs relations. NGOs were also constantly referred to as 'third sector' between the state and the market yet not much research had been undertaken to verify how this came about (Tvedt, 2006:679). What had not

been stated clearly in the literature was that NGOs emerged as a result of the donor funding (Tvedt, 2006:679).

Fisher (1997b:441) contends that much of the NGO literature "obscures its political stance in simple categories and generalizations." Thus, in an attempt to deconstruct this generalized approach, Fisher (1997:441-443) proposes an anthropological view point that examines:

> "*(a)* how discourses about NGOs create knowledge, define sets of appropriate practices, and facilitate and encourage NGO behaviour defined as appropriate; (*b)* how complex sets of relationships among various kinds of associations, the agencies and agents of the state, and individual and communities have had an impact in specific locales at specific times; and (*c)* how we can avoid reductionist views of NGOs as fixed and generalizable entities with essential characteristics and contextualize them within evolving processes of association."

Fisher thus calls attention to the way in which discourses shape perceptions and practices of NGO activities. These discourses have influenced the understanding and interpretation of NGOs in post-conflict peacebuilding without contextual validation, further abstracting norms and practices of NGO peacebuilding.

In criticizing the hegemonic approaches to liberal peace, the liberal peace critics have paradoxically taken a western-centric approach to interpreting NGO activities without bringing out the local voices of the affected populations. In other words, the critics have advocated for the importance of taking the local needs into account without letting the locals speak for themselves.

The *second* is that liberal peace critics have tended to generalize on what NGOs do but fail to conduct an analysis of the internal organization of the NGOs,

their identity, and the reasons for which they choose to do the activities they undertake. Thus, in order to understand the extent to which conditionality of aid has led to conditionality of peace (hence 'conforming' NGOs to liberal peace), it is important to undertake an analysis based on institutional theorist perspective.

Institutional theorists assert that there are different factors that lead to common identification and restructuring of organizations, such as organizational culture, personnel, resources, historical events and urgency of issues to be addressed (Kondra and Hinings, 1998). Organizational field refers to a community of organizations with similar objectives and frequent interactions. Hence, institutional theory asserts that in most cases "organizations are characterized by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy…" (Scott and Meyer, 1983).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) discuss the process of homogenization and institutionalization that can lead to what they refer to as *isomorphic institutional change*. They identify three mechanisms to this process: the first is *coercive* mechanisms from external agencies on which NGOs are dependent. This implies pressures that "could be felt as force, persuasion or as invitation to join in a collusion" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 150). In NGO peacebuilding this could be through standard expectation in proposal writing, programme implementation and report writing that have to meet particular standards, whether internally or externally induced. The second is *normative* mechanisms which emerge from professionalization of project management and adherence to specific norms such as work ethics, code of conduct and respect of the rule of

law; and the third, *mimetic* mechanisms which entail a process of imitating other organizations or approach to implementation of a particular project in order to achieve similar results or avoid appearing deviant. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) refer to the three mechanisms as 'institutionally induced isomorphism'. In other words, the standard institutionalization emerges as a pressure to meet the expectations within a particular category of social agents.

In a similar perspective, a group of international NGOs came up, in 1997, with an initiative to set minimum standards for humanitarian assistance and accountability in disaster response. This came to be known as *The Sphere Project*[36] (2004), resulting in the institutionalization of the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. Another such initiative is the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) that sets minimum operational standards for education in humanitarian situations. In other words, international organizations often seek to set particular norms for the organizational activities within specific contexts (Kean, 2003). In the international aid system, agencies like Development Assistance Committee (DAC) regulate aid standards among donor states, becoming what Le Goff (1984) terms *moral book-keepers.*

[36] The Sphere Project is an initiative of a group of humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. The Project was launched in 1997 and it framed a Humanitarian Charter which stipulates Minimum Standards to be adhered to in disaster response and humanitarian assistance. As a result the first Sphere handbook was published in 2000. The Charter is based on the principles stipulated in international humanitarian law, refugee law, international human rights law, and the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Disaster Relief.

However, organizational change theorists would argue against a deterministic isomorphism and assert that organizations change when the environment changes. For example, Lant and Mezias (1992) assert that a routine organizational learning engenders inspirational levels that "mediate the interpretation of failure and success while simultaneously adapting to performance." Hence, while isomorphism could denote convergence to common identity it nevertheless does not limit re-orientation to new experiences from organizational learning. In other words, "the same processes that lead to first-order learning and convergence can provide the raw material for second-order learning and reorientation" (Lant and Mezias, 1992: 64).

International NGOs with activities in different parts of the world often have to live with the tension between observing universalist standards that mark their identity and values, and the complexities of the contextual imperatives in the local settings (Ossewaarde et al., 2008). The tension is further stretched by the fact that NGOs have to constantly justify their multi-level legitimacies, which a number of authors have identified as normative, regulatory, cognitive and output legitimacies (Lister, 2003; Ossewaarde et al. 2008; Attack, 1999).

Normative legitimacy refers to the ideals and objectives of a given organization (Lister, 2003: 179). For example, International NGOs like Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI) base their normative legitimacy on the defence of human rights and similarly, peace organizations on conflict mediation, restoration of broken relationships and credible presence. The *regulatory*

legitimacy denotes the act of NGOs conforming to international law while undertaking their activities. Logically however, NGOs would be expected to comply with local regulations and expectations of the host governments. Besides normative and regulatory legitimacy, NGOs have to earn *cognitive* legitimacy by adhering to their mission and being seen to deliver the expected outcomes to the stakeholders, hence affirming *output* legitimacy. I would add *beneficiary legitimacy* evidenced by credible presence and acceptance by the local population, based on the value and relevance of the work being done.

Ossewaarde et al (2008: 45) assert that differentiation in internal organizational approaches to issues can threaten NGO legitimacy particularly when "legitimacy sources contradict each other." Hence, the challenge for most NGOs is to strike a balance between normative legitimacy and accommodation of plurality of voices and methods in responding to contextual demands. Besides, different stakeholders make different demands on the various levels of NGO legitimacy. For example, donor agencies have specific conditions for the money they give, "whether for visibility, accountability, or a sense of engagement in the process" (Smillie and Minear, 2004). On the other hand, beneficiaries of the NGO activities equally have expectations that may not be met by the NGOs. Subsequently, NGOs may be forced to reconcile these competing demands by repackaging their activities in a manner that suits specific stakeholders (Oliver, 1991; Smith, 1995; Hasenfeld, 1983).

The *third* is that claims made by liberal peace critics that NGO peacebuilding is *externally* driven, mostly by western nations, are not well founded. Such

assertions need an in-depth analysis of the interactive processes in play between different agents. Basing his assertions on empirical evidences of the analysis of three international religious organizations, namely, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Gerstbauer (2009) demonstrates how NGO peacebuilding is not externally driven.[37] He is emphatic that a good number of organizations are influenced by their internal convictions based on the foundational values, the charisma of the organizational leaders, and historical events that mark a turning point for the organizations. Experiences of conflict in the Balkans and in Rwanda marked a turning point for Catholic Relief Services (CRS) leading the organization to adapt a stronger commitment to the work of justice through a 'justice lens'.[38] This could be seen as a principled assertion that at the same time has a pragmatic impact on the way in which an organization responds to situations of conflict. Aall (1996:373) reinforces this point when she states that the criticism

[37] Gerstbauer (2009:846) gives elaborate examples on how NGOs have been effective on the ground in transforming situations of conflict: "In the Philippines, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) participated in a cooperative project with other organizations to develop training programs called Culture of Peace. The program, contextualized to the Muslim Christian conflict in Mindanao, was a community-based approach to examine things like shared history, identity issues, and stereotypes (CRS int. Quality and Support). CRS has also helped support or establish local Peace and Justice Commissions– which aid in mediating local conflicts–in many parts of the world, including Chad, E. Timor, Angola, Nicaragua, and South Africa (CRS int. Constituent Relations; CRS, 2000). A large percentage of Mennonite Central Committee's peacebuilding work involves training and capacity building. In Central America, where Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has a strong church constituency that shares its vision of peace, MCC's main role is in programme support and training to encourage national peace workers (MCC int. Latin American/Caribbean Office). In Asia, where few Mennonite churches exist, MCC has various peace workers involved in community and university-level training (MCC int. Peace Office). Finally, organizations have been involved in dialogue promotion and mediation between disputants. For example, CRS supports the Centre for Social and Corporate Responsibility that facilitates dialogue between oil companies and communities in the Niger Delta in Nigeria (CRS, Peacebuilding, n.d.). MCC has been involved in some higher level negotiations through some of its well-known mediators like John Paul Lederach and Ronald Kraybill." GERSTBAUER, L. C. 2009. The Whole Story of NGO Mandate Change: The Peacebuilding Work of World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, and Mennonite Central Committee. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* 39**,** 844-865.

[38] Justice Lens refers to the vision that CRS designed as *modus operandi* in all its programmes (Appleby, 2000:52). CRS trains its professionals to adopt Church's teaching on human rights and social justice through Catholic Social Teaching. APPLEBY, R. S. 2000. *The ambivalence of the sacred : religion, violence, and reconciliation.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

that NGO peacebuilding approaches are western-centric is often unfair and not contextualized. She asserts that "many NGOs work closely with local groups to build on indigenous methods of conflict resolution and to build up capacity for peacebuilding within the society in conflict" (Aall, 1996:373).

NGOs participate in peacebuilding for different reasons. Figuring out the "potential effectiveness" (Gerstbauer, 2009:847) of the NGOs is important in broadening the understanding of NGO peacebuilding. This would entail making a distinction between NGO participation in peacebuilding work because there is funding for it, and NGOs doing the same because it is the "principled part of their organizational mission" (Gerstbauer, 2009:847). This implies understanding the fundamental articles of faith that define the conviction behind the NGO mandate and their historical experience in holding on to their peacebuilding practice (Henry, 1999:116; Salm, 1999:101).

The *fourth* is that post-conflict contexts vary and are complex. There are different levels and categories of post-conflit settings, and conflict intervention mechanisms. I would identify four categories of post-conflict settings: the first is militarized conflicts between two or more countries. This was common in the Cold War era. The second is extreme cases of human rights violation by the state or a sector of the state, especially targetting one or several groups within a country; the third is internal conflict with a threat to national and regional peace; the fourth is low intensity conflicts which may still pose some level of threat to the civilians. The UN and international community have tended to intervene in the first three categories. However, even within these categories contextual experiences are very diverse. Most liberal peace critics have based their

arguments against militarized peacebuilding that is characterized by heavy military presence. Frequently cited examples have come from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Bosnia and Iraq (Richmond and Franks, 2007; Paris, 2004a; Coles, 2002). Such a restricted approach ignores other post-conflict contexts such as northern Uganda which is a low intensity conflict that has not experienced heavy UN military operations.

The *fifth* is that liberal peace critics have ignored the fact that peacebuilding is a complex interactive process that takes different contextual adaptations. It is important to take into account the complexity of the diverse interactions and how they produce new discourses and practices of peacebuilding.

In explaining the adaptive systems[39] in complex situations, Boisot and Child (1999:238) observe that generally organizations can choose *complexity reduction* or *absorption*. In complexity reduction organizations generate a generalized perspective and understanding of a phenomenon with a single representation, while ignoring the diverse components. The second option is to absorb the complexity "through the creation of options and risk-hedging strategies" (Boisot and Child, 1999:238). This could imply the holding of different, sometimes contradictory understandings of the same phenomeonon. In my analysis, the liberal peace critics have chosen the first option above by reducing to generalization the complexities of the divergences and

[39] Complex Adaptive Systems (CASs) have generally been defined as interactive networks of relationships that may be independent or interdependent within a complex system that is multi-layered (Valente, 2010; Stacey 2001; Holland, 1995): VALENTE, M. 2010. Demystifying the Struggles of Private Sector Paradigmatic Change: Business as an Agent in a Complex Adaptive System. *Business & Society,* 49, 439-476; STACEY, R. D. 2001. *Complex responsive processes in organizations: Learning and knowledge creation.* London: Routledge; HOLLAND, J. H. 1995. *Hidden order: How adaptation builds complexity.* Reading: MA, Helix Books.

convergences of the normative definitions of the post-conflict contexts; failing to analyze the different levels of complex interactions between the NGOs and local community; local and international NGOs; local staff and international staff within international NGOs; donor relations with offices abroad and those in the field; the constant dynamism of NGO conflict impact assessment and the result from some of the lessons learned, and how these influence approaches to peacebuilding. There is a gap in literature on how these interactions contribute to the peacebuilding practice.

Complexity therefore lies in the autonomy of different entities and how they mutually interact with each within different patterns. This implies that the "simple rules that govern the interaction between agents tend to result in complex behaviours that are not natural extensions of these rules of interactions" (Valente, 2010:445). It would therefore be imperative to develop a comprehensive "understanding of the nature and causes of local level challenges to peacebuilding, in order to formulate effective responses" (Manning, 2003:26). For example, the local actors often have their own reasons and motivations for the armed struggle (Kalyvas, 2003). The complexity within each conflict setting implies that any intervention is part of a wider system of interactions and relationships. Thus, acknowledging the underlying complexity would imply acknowledging the divergent cases that do not fit the liberal peace critique. Besides, these different entities are dynamic with internal differentiations within their own categories and may neither represent uniformity nor lineal progression.

The *sixth* is that the donor agencies or governments are not homogeneous. Besides there is not a general consensus among the donors as is often presumed (Goodhand, 2006:87). Uvin (2002 cited by Goodhand (2006:87)) discusses, in his analysis, the diverse approaches of donor agencies which can be multi-pronged: *minimum* adaptations that integrate development to peace activities within the contextual imperatives; *full* engagement in peacebuilding and inter-governmental advocacy at the field and international levels. These activities aim at improving the donor-policies. There have been efforts among various inter-governmental organizations to revise their approach to funding and integrate principles of "good donorship" (Graves and Wheeler, 2006), which aim at paying closer attention to the needs of the beneficiaries, balancing the international and donor-agency policies within the changing socio-political dynamics.

The *seventh* is that related to the above point, liberal peace approach is neither homogeneous nor monolithic. The liberal peace critics have conglomerated different *liberal* approaches to peacebuilding into a liberal peace framework without developing distinctive contextual variations in its implementation. Mac Ginty (2011:37-41) describes the different manifestations of liberal peace and observes that "Iraq and Afghanistan receive the full regime-change treatment, while Burma and North-Korea do not. Bosnia-Herzegovina is subject to a comprehensive statebuilding programme, while Somalia is largely allowed to fester in statelessness." Similarly, in the recent uprisings in the Arab world western nations focused their interests in putting pressure on the oil-rich Libya and strategic Middle East player, Egypt. The rest of the regimes such as Algeria, Syria, Bahrain and Tunisia were 'left' to manage their own crises. Hence, an

elaboration on these variations in preferential treatments and implementation of liberal peace would put clarity on the definitional boundaries of what entails 'liberal peace'.

The *eighth* is that while the hybridized approach (linking international interventions with the local initiatives) has been proposed by some of the liberal peace critics as a solution to countering the liberal peace approach, it does not fully address the differences in power and conceptualization of peace. The NGOs and local community are in a *de facto* context of power imbalance. The focus should therefore not be in the balancing of powers and the hybridising of the two approaches to peacebuilding, but rather on the exploration of the emerging peace discourse and practice from different levels of interaction. MacGinty (2008:149) alludes to this when he stresses that: "intra and inter-group negotiation and renegotiation of modes of social operation are embedded practices and provide sites for social innovation and exposure to new or externally inspired practices and ideas." The emphasis ought to be put in the intergroup *negotiations* and *re-negotiations* of different positions, interests, understanding and perspectives. The implication is that peacebuilding is an interactive process in a search for a desirable future. Within this interaction, the different agents of peace engage in a process of relational constructionism which I shall elaborate in the subsequent chapters.

The hybridized approach tends to assume that the liberal peace and local peacebuilding practices run parallel to each other, or mutually co-opt each other. The failure to explore the emerging end of the relationship that develops out of the peacebuilding interventions leads to generalized abstractions by the liberal

peace critics. Any peacebuilding practice that engages with the community, even when hegemonic in its approach, would still experience the local agency. Peacebuilding is essentially a *relational* process.

Richmond (2010b:32) acknowledges the potential impact of the local community when he states that international mediators, including NGOs, should act as "enablers for localised dynamics of peace rather than enablers of international architecture of peace." However, this statement is by itself condescending and assumes that the 'locals' need to be 'enabled' to build peace. I would prefer the term 'engage or interact with' in a *relational constructionism* process that builds a desired future. This is because even in the most difficult of circumstances the local community would always seek the kind of peace they would like to achieve. Hence, any post-conflict initiative should be founded on "the recognition of the resilience and impressive survival abilities of those who have come through the trauma and hardship of violent conflict" (Barakat, 2010b:262). In my field research I came across remarkable resilience among the conflict-affected population of northern Uganda, which I explain in Chapters Five and Six.

On the other hand while the hybridized approach may sound innovative, many development NGOs working in humanitarian settings have over the years revised their approaches to be conscious of the local settings. These have emerged through the emphasis on participatory approaches, empowerment and local capacity building in the 1980s and 1990s. While there is still so much to be done in terms of achieving the intended objectives of sustainable peace and

development, these earlier attempts demonstrate the beginning of a shift in conceptualization of peacebuilding practice. The emphasis should therefore not be on the hybrid approach but rather on the change processes and theories that develop from different levels of interactions.

The *nineth* is that cricism alone is not enough. It is important to explore different ways in which post-conflict reconstruction could be effective. Gergen (2001:47) warns that *critique* can be problematic: a *critique* tends to acquire certain characteristics similar to those held by the proponents of the *critique* in question. Thus, by critiquing a given position one tends to essentialize the issue of discourse and construct discussions based on the same themes. For example, the liberal peace critics would base their discourse on the conceptualization of peacebuilding that is contrary to that of the proponents of liberal peace. This situation creates a binary by which "the critique renders support to the ontology implicit in the initial network of assertions, an ontology that might wither or dissolve without the critical impulse" (Gergen, 2001:47).

This does not mean that liberal peace critics have not come up with any suggestions. In fact, the approach of liberal peace critics would fall under what Owen (2010:8-7) refers to as the 'good peace research' which has a critical edge because it challenges the "existing patterns and practices that reinforce or accept vulnerabilities, injustice or disempowerment." What is however more important would be engagement into the the next step of dialogue and negotiations for policy change. Such policy changes even when minimal could

have a positive impact without necessarily changing the status quo of the world order (Green, 2010:7). The liberal peace critics should therefore seek space for influencing the change of policies that sustain negative effects of liberal peace. This would mean scaling up efforts towards direct encounter with the decision making bodies.

The *tenth* is that it is important to develop a discourse on the ethics of peacebuilding. This would provide a framework for analysis of the peacebuilding practices. A lot of the criticisms of the liberal peace demonstrate a search for a standard ethics of peacebuilding practice. MacGinty (2008:149) underlines this point when he asserts that "all peace-making techniques and assumptions should be exposed to rigorous tests of relevance and fitness for purpose." This process has to be based on specific ethical principles which are rooted on the moral foundations of human rights, natural and international law, socio-cultural and religious values in respective contexts.

Tadjbakhsh (2010:117) attests that engaging "with the ethics of peacebuilding means channelling the question from whether peacebuilding should be done to how to do it in a legitimate manner." The challenging task is to define the kind of human security framework that could legitimate peacebuilding in the post intervention period within the "ethics of non-hegemonic engagement" (Tadjbakhsh, 2010:117).

Peacebuilding ethics is framed within power relations in social change. It is thus important to make a critique of the conceptualization of power. Implicit power dynamics can rapidly change the conflict landscape. Intervening foreign groups, besides imposing their hegemonic military and economic power, could also empower particular sectors of the society against others. Such situations could lead to more conflicts rather that transforming the conflicts.

Peacebuilding ethics similarly implies preconditions and conditions for the *use of force*. The use of force has been discussed since the *Peace of Westphalia* that put emphasis on sovereignty and principle of non-intervention. This was further revised by the United Nations that accentuated the institution of the legitimisation and control of the use of force, sovereignty of nations and responsibility to protect human lives through humanitarian intervention. Unilateral use of force has further heightened the debate on the legitimization of the use of force, as I have discussed above. The challenge therefore lies in developing a peacebuilding ethics that limits the monopoly of the use of force by the UN, on the one hand, and the unilateral use of force by the powerful nations of the West, on the other. From a legal perspective such a balance of power would imply "the transformation of all kinds of power into one generally accepted or at least acceptable legal order" (Lienemann, 2007:83).

The discussion on the ethics of peace should also examine how peace is *conceptualized* and *practiced*. 'Universal' conceptualization of peace is dominantly western and often lacks contextual diversity of the ethics of peace.

This conceptualization, based on the balance of the use of force, has marginalized other diverse conceptualizations that are contextually based. The call for the ethics of peace therefore demonstrates the need for a global dialogue on re-conceptualization of peace and its relevance within contextual imperatives.

Conclusion

NGO peacebuilding finds its articulation within the larger framework of international peacebuilding. The discussions above have primarily focused on how NGOs fit within this broader framework that can either co-opt NGO peacebuilding, run parallel or in opposition to it. In my critique of the liberal peace critics I have underscored that the liberal peace critics have based their critiques against systems of international peacebuilding on a single interpretive scheme (*liberal* peace) without examining the contextual, organizational, social and political diversities. Such an oversight limits the authenticity of liberal peace criticisms. Another important aspect is that NGOs are diverse and should not be analyzed as a single entity. Understanding this diversity is critical in making well founded and focused critiques. Ignoring an institutional theorist perspective in the analysis of the NGOs leads to generalized articulations that overlook the complex phenomenon of the NGO sector. Similar analysis ought to be undertaken when looking at the donor agencies and governments which equally have diverse characteristics, internal dynamics and counteractive power plays.

The claims made by liberal peace critics that NGO peacebuilding is *externally* driven by the western nations' agenda need to be based on contextual evidence. The critics have relied on anecdotal evidences from situations of militarized peacebuilding that cannot be generalized to all post-conflict settings. Besides, post-conflict contexts are often complex with diverse historical dynamics of conflict. It is also important to note that peacebuilding is a complex process that varies according to different actors, historical circumstances and diverse interactive processes.

Understanding the interactive processes in peacebuilding is critical. This is because the different dimensions of interaction between NGOs, donors and community are often experienced at individual, group and institutional levels. These encounters lead to different constructions of peacebuilding discourse and practice. My emphasis has been that while there is need to acknowledge the power dynamics within global and grassroots peacebuilding, more importantly it is vital to analyse the interactive dynamics of NGO peacebuilding at different levels and how this generate new peacebuilding discourse and practice.

Relationships and interactions that develop in the process of building peace tend to generate processes of mutual influences, discoveries, explorations and dialogical resolutions of conflicts. Most literature on liberal peace critique does not analyse the outcomes of this interaction. Despite imbalances in power relations between different actors, positive change can still be achieved within the same dynamism of relations. The 'local' has agency even in the most difficult circumstances of conflict.

In order to further understand the different levels of interactions in peacebuilding I have developed a theoretical framework of relational constructionism in the next chapter. This concept emphasises the process of reality construction through interactive encounters, relationship building, mutual sense-making, joint enterprises, conversations and relational empathy.

Chapter Three: Relational Constructionism in NGO Peacebuilding

Introduction

My interest in this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework that deciphers how heterogeneous groups such as NGOs, local community, donors, local government, traditional leaders and international community relationally interact, and engender peacebuilding practice and discourse. I have chosen to use *relational constructionism* as a theoretical framework. Relational constructionism puts emphasis on relationships, interactions and dialogical processes of social construction (Hosking, 2010a; Bouwen, 2010; Lambrechts et al., 2009). It examines the *relational processes* of social constructionism. 'Interaction' refers to diverse actions of encounter (Hosking, 2006:58) whether meaningful or meaningless, formal or informal, such as: conversations, meetings, individual and group encounters as well as joint actions.

The theoretical framework provides the lenses through which the main research question can be unpacked. The research question is: *To what extent is NGO peacebuilding informed by the local reality, and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding?* The question is mainly concerned with the *processes* of peacebuilding and the interactive agents and factors in place. I therefore seek to understand the existing levels of interaction and emerging processes of social reality construction at the micro-levels of peacebuilding.

Relational constructionism examines the micro level interactions of peacebuilding processes and deciphers dialogical relationships and how these influence the construction of social reality at both micro and macro levels. It also underscores both the process and outcome of relationships. The *process* is mainly articulated by inter-subjectivity, conversations, language and dialogical processes of meaning-making at micro levels (Cunliffe, 2008; Shotter, 1997). This brings into focus how the sense-making processes and mutual influences develop, in egalitarian situations as well as in power imbalances; recognition and mis-recognition; leadership and subject; and convergence and divergences. 'Outcomes' refer to the end result of peacebuilding processes while emphasizing the interactive dynamics in human relations and how these interactions affect the manner in which participants in conflict and peacebuilding inter-relate.

I would distinguish between *relationships as outcomes* of peacebuilding intervention, and *relationships as intrinsic part of peacebuilding*. The first one is what peacebuilding aims at achieving in different interventions, whether through conflict resolution, reconciliation activities or problem solving workshops. It is a consequent result of a *process.* The second, *relationships as intrinsic part of peacebuilding* denotes the different levels of interactions that take place in the course of multidimensional peacebuilding interventions and practices. It is the second level of relationships that I would like to underscore in connection with relational constructionism.

The aspect of *relationships as intrinsic part of peacebuilding* is evident in peacebuilding practices, and forms a stronger component of relational constructionism. Conflict generally occurs when different parties seek to mutually influence and protect each other's interests (Kelman, 2009:173). Conflict also emerges when parties pursue their own interests and positions while blocking their adversaries from achieving their own interests. Peacebuilding, from a dialogical perspective, is based on negotiations and focuses on exercising influence on the parties to come to a dialogue table. Thus, both the process of conflict creation and conflict intervention are *relational* and ought to be addressed from the perspective of building relationships.

The discussions in this chapter will be divided into four main components: First, I will introduce the concept of relational constructionism within the broader framework of social constructionism. Second, I will analyse social constructionism as a foundational basis for relational constructionism in order to put clarity on the different operational concepts. Third, I will develop the concept of relational constructionism, its main tenets, its contribution to the social sciences research and the relevance of the framework in the microanalysis of human interaction and co-construction of meaning. Fourth, I will examine the implications of relational constructionism for peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts as a way of setting the ground for my critique of the liberal peace critique. Relational constructionism is a relatively new concept, and this thesis thus contributes to the limited literature.

Part I: Relational Constructionism: An Introduction

The main focus of relational constructionism is deciphering how interactive relationships create new experiences of learning, social action and change. Learning or knowledge is understood as an interactive process and not something that is simply acquired (Craps et al., 2007; Addleson, 2006; Anderson, 1999). Since Gergen's influential work on social constructionism (Gergen, 1985) there have been attempts to develop different versions and interpretations of social constructionism (Shotter, 1984; Gergen, 1994; Shotter and Katz, 1996; Burr, 1995). Thus, social reality is generally considered to be a product of continuous mutual negotiation of meaning among different participants who share their various understanding of contexts. This means that people not only have shared cognitions (Weick, 1995), but also mutual interactions in relationships that create social reality (Gergen, 1994). However, there has recently been a shift towards an emphasis on the 'relational' aspects of social constructionism processes. Thus, the concept of relational constructionism has emerged "to emphasize the relational essence of social reality construction" (Lambrechts et al., 2009:42)

Relational constructionism is an attempt to establish dialogue between constructionism and social constructionism (Botella and Herrero, 2000:408) by emphasizing relationships in processes of meaning-making. Relational constructionism is largely influenced by constructivist theories in psychology and by philosophical and literary works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Mikhail Bakhtin, both of whom are often associated with social constructionism (Botella and Herrero, 2000:408). From a research perspective relational orientation puts emphasis on the fact that whatever is being studied has an impact on the one

studying it, and vice versa (Bouwen, 2010). It thus forms a configuration of relationships that interact back and forth (Capra 1976) in an independent and inter-subjective manner.

Relational constructionism examines learning processes and studies how relations and interactions bring new values. This approach puts accent on "theorizing relational processes" (Crossan et al., 1999:130) instead of focusing on persons, organizations and relations. It further seeks to bridge different levels of learning at individual, group or organizational levels (Hosking and Morley, 1991).

The emphasis on relationality in research was emphasized by the post-structuralist approach to studying the subject (human mind) and object (external reality), not as independent realities, but as interdependent entities (Bradbury and Lichtenstein, 2000:552). The modernist approach to understanding reality was based on fixed structuralist ontologies, thus examining individuals, culture, society, institutions and systems as fixed entities. The post-modern approach has emphasized post-structuralist thinking that emphasizes a transitional and weak ontology of *becoming,* which describes the emerging reality (Chia, 1995). Thus, social reality is both mediated by the social context and conceptual interpretations (Bartunek et al., 1997).

These perspectives to studying social reality have led to the development of theories on interdependence between the self and society, and have neither stressed positivist nor constructionist positions (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977). Further, quantum physicists, in advancing the theory of the composition of the

natural world, observed that atomic particles existed more in relation to each other than as independent discrete objects (Capra, 1975 cited by Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000:552); Wolf, 1980). Feminist studies have also pioneered the use of the term *relationality* to emphasize the importance of human relationships while highlighting the challenges faced by the marginalized, and underscoring how relationships transform human experiences (Hartling, 2008:326).

My primary focus will be on the term *relational constructionism*, which underscores the *process* of interactive relationship building in co-construction of knowledge, new realities and practices, as well as mutual sense-making. This approach stresses the "value of relationships and interdependencies" (Bradbury and Lichtenstein, 2000:552) that continuously generate a variety of meanings and perspectives that contribute to the understanding of our social reality. In NGO peacebuilding this framework will decipher the processes of relational constructionism of the discourse and practice of peacebuilding through the interaction between NGOs, donors and local community.

Relational constructionism is founded on the basic assumptions of social constructionism such as: reality and meaning-making *are culturally and historically situated*; and that human beings *interact and create new meanings* (Gergen, 1999b; Burger and Luckmann, 2007; Burr, 1995). However, relational constructionism goes deeper and delves into the complexities and underlying assumptions behind meaning creations. Sense-making lies in encounter with the 'other' (individual, context, history, environment, discourses) (Cunliffe, 2008; Hosking and Bouwen, 2000). Hence the self exists only in so far as it is

juxtaposed with the other in an interactive process of mutual influences. In order to have an in-depth understanding of relational constructionism it is important to analyze social constructionism as a foundational background.

Part II: Social Constructionism

One of the major challenges in social sciences is the task of developing a theory of human agency within the imperatives of social structure (Houston, 2001:849). In an attempt to understand our reality in relation to the human subject, the philosophy of science interrogates the popular assumptions and accepts "nothing on trust…asks what makes our assumptions rationally defensible" (Greetham, 2006:2). This process seeks to understand knowledge systems and how we can discover the 'truth' within our social structures while at the same time acknowledging the role of the social agent (Smith, 1998:27) in this process. Subsequently, various epistemological positions have developed in search of the 'truth' based on a given "theory of knowledge" (Willig, 2001:2) which oscillates between discussions on whether the subject or human *agency* on the one hand, and the *object* or reality on the other, exist independently, interactively or dependently. In order to understand our reality, social research develops theories that "reveal the underlying factors, or structure, on which are built the complex realities of everyday life" (Crompton and Gubbay, 1977:13).

Social constructionism emerged as an epistemological school of thought in reaction to positivists' assertion that our knowledge of reality is based on an observable world. In positivism the predominant idea is that the reality exists out there and humans attempt to make sense out of it, based on empirical

observations that establish consistency and scientific conclusions. Thus, different entities such as individuals, organizations, institutions and different systems are studied based on their traits, roles and identities (Cunliffe, 2008:124).

Social constructionism takes a more social-subjective perspective of understanding reality as socially and communally constructed (Gergen and Gergen, 2007; Burr, 1995). It asserts that reality does not exist separately from us. Instead we are intimately interwoven with the social reality "as each shapes and is shaped by the other in everyday interactions" (Cunliffe, 2008:124). Social constructionism can be traced back to sociology, social philosophy and social knowledge. Sociology puts accent on how we understand the social reality, or how we experience the world (Garfinkel, 1967) through a continuous process of interpretation. This philosophical perspective underlines that our personal experiences are formed and shaped by the daily social interactions and routine usage of language, which we often take for granted (Schutz, 1960 cited by Cunliffe (2008:124)). This is reflected in the work of Alfred Schutz who worked with Thomas Luckmann in discussing this perspective further (Cunliffe, 2008:124).

The sociology of knowledge, influenced by Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), is taken to be the origin of social constructionism (Cunliffe, 2008:124). This perspective observes that the society exists within the interaction between the subjective and objective world. As such the social world is understood and interpreted within a dialectical interaction between externalization, objectification and internalization. The "society is a human

product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product" (Berger and Luckmann, 1960:61). Berger and Luckmann (1961) argue that the ongoing activities and routines (externalization) humanly produce the social world. But this externalized reality is objective because it affects our lives and we therefore need to encounter and study it. As we interpret the meaning of events around us and other people's subjectivities we become socialized in the world. This process of *internalization* thus entails situating our identity and that of others in the real world. Berger and Luckmann (1960:137 cited by Cunliffe (2008:124)) therefore assert that the moment we become conscious of our identity as "generalized other" we become "an effective member of society and in subjective possession of self and a world." This perspective thus shows that knowledge is socially constructed and that facts are social products.

Social constructionism relies on the assumptions we make about our own understanding of society and how knowledge is produced. Creating awareness about this knowledge is critical in understanding the process of knowledge creation and social practices. In fact understanding our assumptions will help us see how these assumptions "affect our focus of study, our research method and ways of theorizing...the type of knowledge we generate, and how we engage in the learning process" (Cunliffe, 2008: 126-7).

At this juncture it would be important to clarify that there are different, but closely related, interpretations of social constructionism. Gergen (1999: 59-60) identifies five versions: *radical constructivism* largely based on rationalist philosophy that puts emphasis on the construction of reality by the individual mind; *constructivism* which asserts that the mind constructs reality in relation to

the external world; *social constructivism* that refers to mind construction of reality, through interaction with reality, and influence of social relationships; *social constructionism* which puts emphasis on the discourse examines interactions between the self and world, and how these interactions influence social relationships; and lastly, *sociological constructionism* that examines how the understanding of self and world are influenced by the forces of social structure. It is however common to find these terms used interchangeable in different literature.

The discussion here will be based on social constructionism, while borrowing from other forms of reality-construction. The primary focus will be on the dimension held by Gergen (1999; 2001) and Burr (1995; 2003) which puts emphasis on the discourse that looks at interactions between the self and world, and how such interactions impact on social relationships.

Different Aspects of Social Constructionism

I will critically discuss three different but interrelated concepts within social constructionism. First, social constructionism holds that our world is socially constructed through *human relationships* and *discourse* (language). This is a counter argument against the positivists and empiricist who held that the "nature of the world can be revealed by observation, and what *exists* is what we perceive to exist" (Burr, 1995: 3). Second, our social world is *culturally* and *historical* situated (Burr, 1995:4). This position challenged the positivist notion that "scientific claims to knowledge were effectively uncontaminated by culture, history and ideology" (Gergen, 2001: 7). This implies, according to Garfinkel's

(1984) *ethnomethodology,* which is closely associated with social constructionism, that our world is contingent and limited by time and space. Third is that *language* is a critical element in constituting a "socially constructed knowledge" (Willig, 2001: 7).

According to Houston (2001), the above categorizations look at social constructionism in two perspectives: the role of human agency in "constructing social reality" (Willig, 2001: 7; Giddens, 1991) and the role of discourse and its impact on human experience (Foucault, 1972). I will now take a critical review of the three categorizations above.

The first assumption of social constructionism is that ***human relationships and language*** play a significant role in reality construction. Social constructionism maintains the position that knowledge is not limited to scientific theories or empirical observations (as held by positivists and realists) that are detached from the social reality. Knowledge is instead grounded on relationships and social processes (Gergen, 2003:16), and is realized within the community. Different individuals, groups and historical events contribute to knowledge. However, knowledge perspectives are not fixed. The community can choose to abandon a given perspective of knowledge when they question its intelligibility. Thus, a community could suggest various interpretations, embrace or abandon them as various levels of relationships unfold (Gergen, 2003a:16). This is a process of negotiated understanding (Garfinkel, 2003) that constantly connects with different activities of social agents. In other words no particular knowledge

claim can be taken to be individually constructed, since its inception comes from the interaction with the rest of the community members.

The second assumption of social constructionism is that ***our social world is culturally and historically constructed***. In other words what is considered to be real or true is a result of social relationships within historical and cultural setting (Gergen, 1999: 237). This approach is relativist and confines reality to the historical and cultural contexts. Social constructionists examine cultures as independent monads creating their own truths. Giddens (1984: 97-98), in discussing duality of structure, observes that whatever reality a society constructs, while particular to that society, is embedded in practices in the past or within other societies. This perspective could be seen to fall under 'strict' constructionist position which discusses social constructionism beyond the immediate context and the broader implications of sense-making processes (Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994). From a sociologist's perspective knowledge is socially constructed, thus adapting a contextualist approach to social constructionism.

The third component of social constructionism is that ***language socially constructs knowledge***. Knowledge is created through social interaction processes in various mediums but particularly through language (Burr, 1995: 4). The relationship between language and knowledge in social sciences has developed over the years. Empiricists sought to establish the relationship between language and the observable world. This school asserts that "sense

perception provides the basis for knowledge acquisition" and as such "theory is constructed" from the evidence gained from the observable data (Willig, 2001: 3). Positivists establish that there is a direct correlation between the observable and their representation, between our perception and the understanding of the world as a continuous process of acquiring objective knowledge (Willig, 2001: 3). However, in the new debate beyond philosophy of science, post-empiricists, post-structuralist and post-modernist schools of thought posit that knowledge can objectively reside in the language (Gergen, 1994: 33).

The different sense-making processes that lead to knowledge claims often develop into a discourse. In social constructionism, a 'discourse' entails "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of event" (Burr, 1995:48). Parker (1992:5) adds that a discourse is "a system of statements which constructs an object." In other words it is a process of meaning-making through interpretation and construction of a new reality. Thus, every particular "discourse claims to say what the object really is, that is, claims to be the truth" (Burr, 1995: 49). This process is mediated by language which "produces and constructs experience of ourselves and each other" (Burr, 1995: 45).[40]

[40] While social constructionism discusses knowledge as a social process it does not engage in the discussion that equally acknowledges that "knowledge transfer is always endogenous to the mind and body" (Ringberg and Reihlen, 2008: 2). Besides, it is fundamental to determine whether the knowledge transfer or exchange is negotiated, collective, unique or simply stereotypical (Ringberg and Reihlen, 2008:2). Critical theorists question this approach and seek to deconstruct manipulated realities. They identify ideological assumptions, the influencing forces behind them and how such forces can be subdued in order to emancipate an oppressed society (Dyzek, 1995:99). RINGBERG, T. & REIHLEN, M. 2008. Towards a Socio-Cognitive Approach to Knowledge Transfer. *Journal of Management Studies,* 45**,** 912-935; DYZEK, J. S. 1995. Critical Theory as a Research Program. *In:* WHITE, S. K. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict is often in constant tension between, on the one hand empirically based organizational culture and values, and on the other the *latent knowledge* that is context specific, innovative, dynamic, deviant, always producing "new knowledge where it had not existed before" (Hargadon and Fanelli, 2002: 290-291). NGOs are sometimes constrained by the organizational culture that confines new knowledge to the internal "evolution and replication of organization's physical and social artefacts" (Hargadon and Fanelli, 2002:291). The contextual experiences on the ground can also influence NGOs' approach to conflict response and develop new knowledge. It has been common for the NGOs to refer to the 'lessons learned' as a way of acknowledging new knowledge and anticipating future events (Salama et al., 2004).

One of the criticisms against social constructionism is that it limits and almost effaces the individual agency and creativity within culture. Burr (1995:50), for example observes that, individual positions on a particular social issue "have their origin not in the person's private experience, but in the discursive culture that those people inhabit." Hence, individual writings and narratives are evaluated as "instances of discourses, as occasions where particular discourses are given the opportunity to construct an event in this way rather than that" (Burr, 1995: 50). Such a process marginalizes the human agency from social analysis (Mouzelis, 1991) and processes of social change. Private experiences are valid in themselves and should not be limited to the relational aspect of social constructionism. Besides, constructionism cannot be fully articulated

without “reflexivity and active critique” which require subjectivity in return (Osbeck, 2001:444). Similar views have been expressed by others (Halling and Lawrence, 1999; Harré and Krausz, 1996; Harré and Robinson, 1997) to emphasize the relativist approach of social constructionism.

The question then is whether Gergen and social constructionism proponents of his school deny ontological categories of reality such as body or discourse, which Halling and Lawrence (1999:83) describe as the “raw materials” used in social constructionism argumentation. Gergen (1999a:113) however responds that “there is nothing within social constructionism that aims to abandon or destroy the concept of agency…Social constructionism does not provide a first philosophy or foundational ontology.” Instead social constructionism elaborates “the importance of discourse in the taken-for-granted realities (such as agency), the significance of relationship in generating discursive meaning” (Gergen, 1999:114).

Although the roots of constructionist thought may be traced to long-standing debates between empiricist and rationalist schools of thought, constructionism moves beyond the dualism of these traditions and places knowledge within the process of social interchange (Gergen, 1985). The challenge for the realist-social constructionism debate largely lies in the epistemological and ontological relationships of their assertions. *How do we know what we claim to know?* This epistemological question entails a *method* that develops the theory of what we know (ontology). Critical realism acknowledges the fact that there is a world out

there independent of our minds, even though we cannot fully comprehend its existence (Mark, 2000). Bhaskar's critical realism asserts that the independent reality can be understood as experienced and non-experienced, but also as new experiences through causal mechanisms (cited by Houston, 2001: 850). It is at the causal level that change is generated through various social mechanisms which equally recognize the individual role within such dynamics in the society (Houston, 2001: 851).

Social constructionism fails to explain the independent reality outside the human mind. Gergen (1999: 222) asserts that social constructionism does not deny the existence of the real world out there and that the discourse on what exists and what does not exist is confined to cultural and historical experiences. However, social constructionism does not enter into the debate of the validation of the knowledge claims. Instead social constructionism, from a sociological perspective, concerns itself with *explanations* of the knowledge construction, that is, how processes of interaction construct new meaning. However, such an argument is near-relativist and fails to find "normative theories" which can explain the reality of "poverty, diseases and social conflict" (Houston, 2001: 848). Gergen (1994a:68) observes that "constructionism makes no denial concerning explosions, poverty, death, or the world out there more generally. Neither does it make any affirmation...constructionism is ontologically mute. Whatever is simply is."

But the *'what is, simply is'* pronouncement is in itself an ontological statement. The only difference is that, from a social constructionism perspective, it is made regardless of who is making the claim and whether the assertions can be tested to be true or valid. Thus, to question *how* 'what is' came *to be* is to enter into an ontological discourse which does not interest most social constructionists. Constructionists are contented by the observation that all methods to sense-making are valid, and as such all knowledge claims are treated as equal (Liebrucks, 2001:373).

However, the ontological discourse on the reality around us can be advanced without necessarily jeopardizing the assertions of social constructionism, as others have demonstrated (Harré and Robinson, 1997; Martin and Sugarman, 2000; Liebrucks, 2001). Liebrucks (2001:372) for example holds that social constructionism does not argue that "*everything* is socially constructed." Further one can assert that there is no significant difference with *realism* since social constructionism holds that "there is a reality existing independently of our beliefs about it; and…that it is possible to acquire genuine knowledge about it" (Liebrucks, 2001:372).

Another criticism is that social constructionists do not discuss the ethical question under the pretext that each society ought to determine its own future (Gergen 1999: 233). But suppose the sense-making process is dominated by a particular section of the society, wouldn't the rest of the community feel marginalized? In other words, if social constructionists assume that truth is

objectified within a given culture, and that individual constructions form part of the dialogue of meaning-making (Burr, 1995), how would one address the contradictions, disagreements and competing voices within cultures, particularly when dialogue fails?

The development of culture in any society is necessarily a guided process and "*gets established* in forms of authoritative discourse" (Scott, 2003: 101) which in some cases could marginalize certain sections of the society. In the discussion about the inter-relations between power and knowledge, Foucault (1983:133) underscores the fact that 'truth' is generated within systems of power and produced to serve and sustain the same power. In an attempt to reach a more acceptable discourse Habermas (1990:65-66) proposes *communicative action*[41] that details "discourse ethics" which ensures a transparent process of dialogue without any forms of imposition.

While social constructionism, as Gergen (1999: 228) puts it, admits that there can be inter-cultural dialogue among peoples in a process of seeking "inclusive futures together", it does not however detail how contradictory 'truths' can be reconciled. Given that social constructionism generates meaning-making in search for truths that are culturally and historically situated (Burr, 1995: 4), it is important in NGO peacebuilding to research the extent to which the various levels of interactions between the peace actors create new sense-making

[41] Habermas (1990:134) explains that communicative action takes place "when actors are prepared to harmonize their plans of action through internal means, committing themselves to pursuing their goals only on the condition of an agreement – one that already exists or one to be negotiated- about definitions of the situation and prospective outcomes."

perspectives that are important in post-conflict reconstruction. This research investigates the possible outcomes of the different world views (NGOs, donors and local community), and the new meanings that this relationship generates.

Part III: From Social Constructionism to Relational Constructionism

There are two related but different notions of social constructionism (Cunliffe, 2008:127) that emerge from the above discussion. The first is *subjective and inter-subjective reality* which underscores that reality is constantly negotiated by individuals who have their own understanding, perceptions and views of reality and sense-making within the social context (Schön, 1983; Watzlawick, 1984). Reality in return plays back into an encounter with the individual. The second is *objectified* reality and the *always emerging in-the-moment* realities. This notion asserts that while reality is socially produced there is an objective aspect of reality that exists independently. Thus, organizations or societies are constantly produced through encounters over a stretched period of time.

From the social constructionism perspective above researchers are often inclined to study reality from a macro-level angle. Thus, some authors would be interested in studying the *products* of construction such as analyzing *objectified* institutions, practices, strategies and social identities, and how discursive forces influence their characterization and existence (Allen, 1998; Kornberger and Brown, 2007; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). A similar perspective has been taken by the liberal peace critics (Richmond, 2005a; Carey, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2008; Doyle and Sambanis, 2000) who make generalized assertions about western nations' 'liberal peace agenda' and the NGO peacebuilding in the

post-conflict settings. Other authors have studied how different approaches to construction of reality compete and resist each other (Boje, 1994; Martin et al., 1983), hence furthering the discussions on the hegemonic imposition of the western nations over states emerging out of conflict; and another group of authors have focused on understanding how social facts entailed in stories, metaphors and narratives engender and are products of organizational culture, conceptualization, characterization and identification (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Martin et al., 1983; Martin, 1982).

Relational constructionism emphasizes that the process of social constructionism is continuously created, dialogued upon and changed. The process of meaning-making is an interactive process of encounter with the other. This is primarily because "we live in a web of relationships" (Cunliffe, 2008:129). This perspective to reality construction is complemented by authors who have underscore that the "process of sense-making is cognitive" (Cunliffe, 2008:127; Weick, 1995) and thus largely influenced by the individual mind construction. For example, Weick (1995) observes that organizations are socially constructed by their own members who determine, individually and in a group, the sense-making of their surroundings and interpretation of the reality. The produced knowledge in this process examines the "forms of reality that language constructs" (Cunliffe, 2008:127). While there are many varieties of organizational studies, there have been recent shifts in studying organizations not simply based on learning outcomes and programming, but also on processes of interaction (Addleson, 2006). Thus, the learning metaphor has emerged as "a substitute for the rational planning paradigm" (Hosking and

Bouwen, 2000:130), which has subsequently introduced new ways and approaches of examining organizational experience rather than seeking radical changes in the practice (Addleson, 2006; Easterby-Smith, 1999; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995).

I will discuss the major themes of relational constructionism while relying on a number of authors who have influenced this concept (Hosking and Morley, 1991; Hosking and Bouwen, 2000; Lambrechts et al., 2009; Botella and Herrero, 2000; Crossan et al., 1999; Bakhtin, 1986; Neimeyer, 2000; Sluss and Ashforth, 2008; Cunliffe, 2008).

Relational constructionism examines relational premises on *what exists* (ontology) and the discourse on *how we know* (epistemology). This creates room for a critique on our assumptions and knowledge claims, and how they influence the way we perceive the reality that surrounds us. Thus, any theory development, like liberal peace, ought to be subjected to a critical analysis on the underlying assumptions.

From a *power relations* dimension, relational constructionism shows that groups cannot simply be influenced from outside. This is because group processes develop "ongoing interaction patterns that emerge from continuous negotiation between the different actors involved" (Bouwen and Hovelynck, 2006:128). The encounter in this multiplicity of relationships is contextually and historically embedded within a variety of perceptions. This implies transcending the self and embracing mutuality as an experience of joining together for a purpose

(Blustein et al, 2004: 429). In other words the encounters in interactive relationships are not meant to subsume the other person's/group's identity or values, it is based on a mutual exchange of values, ideas, perceptions and understandings that are culturally and historically embedded.

Relational constructionism studies the process of construction of different discourses (meanings, assertions, metaphors, stories, representations, images) that develop through relationships. As such, through a process of "reciprocal typification of action" (Burger and Luckmann, 2007:42) the relationships generate a process of institutionalization of a new reality (Burger and Luckmann, 2007:42). This interactive process creates "institutionally appropriate rules of conduct" (Burger and Luckmann, 2007: 49) which harmonize the society towards a common future.

The interaction between different entities in reality construction engenders a *relational practice*. Relational practice is "any communicative or task-oriented interaction among organizational actors, exchanging goods or services, while positioning each other in a mutually inclusive relationship as members of a living community" (Bouwen, 2010:22). In NGO peacebuilding this would imply how different actors bring their expertise, passions and agendas into the *practice* of peacebuilding. The different actors form *communities of practice* (CoP) that are in a continuous process of dialogical construction of meaning, in both harmonious and competitive manner.

The term *communities of practice* (CoP) was first coined by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their discussion on situated learning, which refers to how people interactively learn skills and work together. They used the term to refer to a set of activities that are relationally performed by actors who share a common interest. This process can evolve spontaneously from everyday activities or within planned projects. Communities of practice can be "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991:98). The CoP can exist as formal groups with specific objectives, or an online discussion group with a social justice, environmental or political agenda.

Lave and Wenger (1991) originally used the term CoP to refer to the socialization of new comers who begin by learning skills peripherally as they acquire expertise and knowledge in a form of apprenticeship and become active participants. They referred to this process as *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The characteristic ways of belonging to a community is defined by *legitimation* and *participation*, while peripheriality and participation refer to contextual location and identity within the society (Lave and Wenger, 1991:21). The usage of the term 'CoP' has however acquired different interpretations over the years. It has sometimes been used as "a conceptual lens through which to examine the situated social construction of meaning" but also as "a virtual community or informal group sponsored by an organization to facilitate knowledge sharing or learning" (Cox, 2005:527).

Wenger et al (2004) outline the structural characteristics of communities of practice as *domain of knowledge, a notion of community* and *a practice*. The *domain* refers to a field of knowledge which engenders a common ground that becomes a source of inspiration for community members to participate and learn in different social activities. This gives meaning to their commitment to social change. The second is the *notion of community* which bonds everyone together for a common purpose, cultivates interactions and encourages participation in the sharing of ideas and skills. The third is the *practice* which provides the ground for the development of knowledge through mutual sharing and support for emergent initiatives and creative engagement in social issues. Communities of practice have to be nurtured in order for them to grow and be effective in the community. They however have a life cycle of their own and can flourish whether or not they become recognized (Wenger et al., 2007:12).

Communities of practice (CoP) develop *transitional spaces* (opportunities for diverse dialogue) for conversation and dialogue in exploration of a different future. Transitional space refers to the space that "facilitates experiment, openness and confrontation with others, production of meaning and understanding of the Self and the world..." (Dubouloy, 2004:469). Craps et al (2007:89) define *transitional space* as "an open, temporary and dynamic meeting ground with no other purpose than creating a space for dealing with new issues and new work forms." Silverman (2001) adds a different perspective and defines transitional space as "the power of the space between nothing and something, the in-between, which often is silent and powerful..." The organizing principle of transitional spaces differ from case to case and can be

characterized by the interaction and interdependency of present or previous experiences; the praxis of social action; aspirations for a common future; and the sharing of the challenges and experiences of hope and fate (Craps et al., 2007:89; Cooperider and Whitney, 1999; Conway, 2004:57). This means that transitional spaces are characterized by the dynamics of interactions that take place in relationships.

Communities of practice also produce knowledge in the process of developing their discourse and practice. Scholars in organizing theory (Orlikowski, 2002; Gherardi, 2000) following philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Bourdieu, have emphasized the importance of *organizing* based on "the enacted collective practices of knowledge and relationships" (Lambrechts et al., 2009:43). Relational knowledge emerges in the face-to-face encounters, and as such it reflects a "shift from what is *between the ears* of people to what goes on *between the noses* (Bouwen, 2010:26). In other words, "the intelligence is in between noses, not only in between ears" (Bouwen, 2005b cited by Perez (2010:304)). The frontier encounters entail the mutual-crossing of boundaries to experience each other's worlds. Relational constructionism therefore develops personalized encounters that cannot simply be generalized into social organizing.

Knowledge is intrinsically relational and thus an inter-subjective encounter, hence a dialogical process (Cunliffe, 2002). Dialogical processes are founded on interactive conversations that create meaning, bridge discourses and world views, and develop mutually influencing encounters. Bouwen (2010:31-32)

makes a description of “knowledge-as-participation” to emphasise the relational processes of learning and sense-making. This is opposed to knowledge-as-substance which, according to Bouwen (2010:31) reifies knowledge as a thing to be grasped, absorbed and accepted without interrogation or participation. Bakhtin (1981) asserts that meaning lies in *living conversations* with the other in dialogical processes based on daily experiences as well as those of the past and future. Conversations are constructed through relationship with the other, and as Gergen (1999b:98) asserts “meaning lies not within the private mind, but in the process of relating.” Through conversations, language practices of talking and writing emphasize relational aspects of talking *with* and not just *about* (Shotter, 2004). Cunliffe (2008:128) holds that everyday life produces “conversational spaces” between interactive participants.

Lave and Wenger (1991: 57-58) affirm that there is always a tension, within communities of practice, between different dynamisms that take place in the course of learning and social engagement, such as: tensions between new comers and old-timers realized in the continuous social production of CoP; those who support processes of learning and those that oppose it. NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict settings is often faced with similar tensions. These tensions demonstrate that: “Learning, transformation, and change are always implicated in one another, and the status quo needs as much explanation as change” because all parties in CoP work towards producing a common future (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 57-58).

Bridging Differences in Communities of Practice

Does the process of relational construction of discourses and practices within communities of practice necessarily lead to a consensus? The purpose of relational constructionism is not to develop consensus building, but rather to decipher the interactive relationships and how these affect social change processes. However, interactive dialogic interactions can lead to a common understanding. This is what Gadamer (1976:269) refers to as “fusion of horizons.” ‘Horizon’ denotes "the range of possibilities that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, 1976:269). A horizon opens up possibilities of seeing different perspectives, one’s own cultural and historical experience, in relation to the new reality of encounter. This means that a horizon is "something into which we move and that moves with us" (Gadamer 1975:271 cited by Johnsen and Olsen (1992:430)). We carry our human experiences with us, but we also learn from new experiences, encounters with others and contribute to our contexts of encounter (Johnsen and Olsen, 1992:430), hence creating a continuous process of *fusion of horizons*.

In order to bridge inter-subjective and group differences Stephenson and Kippax (2006) suggest “communicating across difference” through a process of “transfiguring relations” which transforms the differences towards a common future. *Transfiguring social relations* “allows us to grapple with the productive ambivalences of communication, without imposing moralizing or de-contextualized imperatives on social action initiatives” (Stephenson and Kippax, 2006:403). This perspective acknowledges the differences, lack of mutual recognition and imbalances in power relations. The emphasis is placed on

activation of agency in all levels of social relations. *Agency* is seen as foundation of personhood (Hare, 2003; Shotter, 1984).

Stephan (2008:35) suggests alliance building and critical self reflection as means of facing the differences within a group. Alliance building entails "working through disagreements and building trust" (Stephan, 2008:35). This implies that members have to look into their own biases and prejudices against others, and dialogue towards a common understanding. Further, in order to bridge differences in perspectives, Stephan (2008:31) proposes *emotional empathy* which is "the capacity to feel the same emotions as members of the other group" in order to bridge each other's prejudices and differences. From a similar perspective Broome (2009) proposes "relational empathy" as a means of bridging differences between parties. He clarifies that relational empathy is a process of "co-creation of meaning by participants in an interpersonal or group setting" (Broome, 2009:185). This process is interactive and engenders new meanings that allow for "new understandings to emerge, creative approaches to be developed, and innovative ideas to be proposed" (Broome, 2009:185).

Bouwen (2010:29) underscores that an organization cannot be studied using "distant instrumentation" that is disconnected from the researcher. Instead, he insists that: "Any study or analysis of organizing is a series of relational activities assembled into an ongoing construction of knowledge by all actors involved" (Bouwen, 2010:29). In this process of learning and knowledge creation, meaning resides in relationships because it is intrinsically "an emergent property of coordinated action" (Gergen, 1999:145). The process of coordination implies a movement-towards-the-other, but guided by a common desire for action.

I found the above perspectives to research to have been important in understanding the context of NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. Through self-reflexivity I was able to identify occasional instances where my identity, perspectives and beliefs played into the research. I have explained these in Chapters Five and Six.

Part IV: Relational Constructionism and Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is intrinsically relational and cannot be understood otherwise. It is an encounter with the reality of conflict, conflict parties, affected environment, dominant and marginalized discourses, power relations and agents of peace and those of conflict. Similarly, conflicts reflect the various oscillating tensions within relationships. The relational aspects in human conflicts have been articulated in different ways over time. Bion (1948) held that groups are interactively faced with different forms of relational aspects that dominate at one point or another: *fight,* which leads to conflict; *flight,* which drives one to avoid conflict; *pairing* which entails interpersonal interaction, or *dependency* on influential figures in a group. Homans (1950 cited by Barker (2000:473)) underscored the diverse relationships between *interaction,* which entails communication between different subjects; *action,* which refers to the task to be achieved and *sentiment,* which connotes relational aspects of group behaviour.

The ensemble of peacebuilding components is therefore set within an interactional existence. According to Galtung (Galtung, 2007) “the basic point is

that peace is a relation between two or more parties…Peace is not a property of one party alone, but a property of the relation between parties." Galtung (2007) conceptualizes the aspirations of peace as a common ground, a place where parties converge. Ontologically peace aspiration becomes the relational space, a neutral meeting point.

Lederach (2003:30) is emphatic that conflict transformation views peace as grounded in the quality of relationships and mutual interactions that influence the way in which we structure our society. Lederach (2003:18) sees conflict as a life giving opportunity rather than a threat. Conflict provokes dynamic interactions, creativity and relationship building within the process of peacebuilding. The dynamism is in both the group of peace practitioners and the affected community. In fact, the two groups might share each other's identity: the practitioners could both be victims of conflict and agents of change, or external to the actual conflict. Lederach (2003:17) suggests that it is important to understand the ebb and flow of conflict as an event that disrupts relationships but at the same time embedded in relationships.

I will discuss relational constructionism in peacebuilding from three closely related perspectives. This will add to the above discussion in setting a framework for understanding NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda, which I discuss in the following chapters. The first is the *partnership and networking*, which refers to how individuals and groups come together and design strategies for a common social cause. The second aspect is *relational practice* of

peacebuilding, which describes how the practice of peacebuilding is an interactive process of meaning-making, searching for both common action and different approaches to bridging differences. The third aspect is *communities of practice* (CoP), which emerge from relational practice and the working relationships that develop in the course of peacebuilding practice. Community-based approaches to peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997; Haider, 2009) can lead to the creation of communities of practice which become active agents of conflict transformation.

Partnership and Networking

NGOs working in post-conflict settings often get into partnership as a means of empowerment and mutual support. Such partnerships have sometimes been criticized as being tainted by imbalanced power relations. However, in relational constructionism partnership and networking facilitate spaces for mutual encounters that bring together multiple experiences.

Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2004: 255-256) assert that organizations enter into partnership to increase efficiency, provide a multi-dimensional approach to problem solving, move from a no-win situation among multiple actors to win-win situation, and lastly, expand decision-making process in the promotion of the public good. Partnership is therefore based on the understanding that partners mutually have something to offer in terms of resources, personnel, skills and the urgency of the issues to be addressed. In other words, partners are able to keep their identity as well as strengthen it through exchanges of ideas, lessons learned and effective means of bringing change to the society.

Peacebuilding is often founded on networks of different agents working for peace. These networks develop into a social capital that is instrumental to social change processes. Thus social capital is *relational* because it is based on a network of relationships that are linked to the need for socialization; achievement of a task; family relations; political, religious, economic, cultural or ideological affiliations. Relational social capital thus refers to "the ability of actors to mobilize their social contacts in order to obtain valued resources" (Brunie, 2009:253). This means that relational social capital depends on the amount of resources that interactive actors can mobilize, and the social network of relationships that facilitate access to these resources (Brunie, 2009:253). Groups with strong ties have high expectations of reciprocity and tend to be tightly bonded together (Ganovetter, 1973 citedby Brunie (2009:255)). The bonding within relationships develops into a bonding social capital, which enhances "intra-community ties and provides the foundation for bringing individuals together" (Brunie, 2009:255). On the other hand, groups with low ties tend to be disjointed although still well networked for achievement of specific objectives (Brunie, 2009:255).

Networked peacebuilding can also be referred to as *strategic peacebuilding,* which Lederach and Scott (2010:36) identify as occurring "when initiatives, whether from below, or above, inside, or out, begin to link and coordinate with differentiated spaces and processes to effect the wider desired change. In a word, constructive transformation unfolds in relational spaces." This process acknowledges the *local* as a vital partner of peacebuilding with the realization that in most cases the *local* already exists in both national and international arenas (Lederach and Scott, 2010:27). Hence, "(p)eacebuilding practice is… an

inter-disciplinary, local-global, expertise-driven approach to building sustainable peace" (Lederach and Scott, 2010:27). Similarly in NGO peacebuilding the daily interactions in the peacebuilding activities engender new relations, provoke intuitive ideas, challenge imposing perceptions and develop creativity for a different future. In the course of these happenings a common practice of peacebuilding emerges that we can refer to *as relational practice*, since it is relationship-induced.

Relational Practice

Relational practice, as I had earlier noted, is an interactive exchange between two or more participants with an impact on their relationship (process) and consequent outcome (goal) of the interaction (Bouwen, 2010; Hosking, 2010a; John, 2010). In this section I will link up the concept of relational practice to peacebuilding activities. Relational practice takes different dimensions, approaches and interpretations in response to conflict. This entails coming together in joint practices to achieve a specific goal. These joint practices "are considered as the carriers of knowledge, learning, and change rather than the reflection or mere 'talking about' getting organized" (Lambrechts et al., 2009:43). The diverse contributions, challenges and perspectives contribute to the peace and conflict discourse, and influence the interpersonal and inter-group relationships and outcomes of peace and conflict.

Bouwen (2010:26-29; 2001) distinguishes three approaches to relational practices of peace. The first is *interaction in processes.* Relational constructionism tends to emphasise analysis of processes of social constructionism and how relationships interplay in the meaning-making

processes. The second aspect of Bouwen's relational practices of peace is the *quality of relationship:* The quality of relational practice is determined by different value-based characteristics. Perez (2010:299) elaborates these as interactive characteristics of mutual exchange based on authentic motivations, mutual criticisms, comparative approaches and engendering processes of learning. The third aspect of Bouwen's relational practice is *con-versational relationship:* The emphasis here is that conversations build relationships, bridges our differences and mediates our world. As I have already discussed above, conversations create opportunities for dialogue, mutual respect, competitions, trust and mistrust, and a learning experience for social change. This is particularly important in conceptualizing the 'learning community of practice' which struggles with the daily tensions, misconceptions, misunderstandings and fears in their peacebuilding practices.

In relational practice, leadership plays an important role in transforming groups, societies and organizations. In relational constructionism leadership is viewed as *relational,* hence the term *relational leadership*. This term is relatively new (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Brower et al., 2000), and has gained currency in studies that examine organizing in communities and organizations. Relational leadership can be defined as "a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e. involving social order) and change (e.g., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviours, and ideologies) are constructed and produced" (Uhl-Bien, 2006:655). This approach to leadership underscores the fact that leadership occurs within relational dynamics in the society and gains recognition based on the quality of relationships.

The dialogical conversations in relationships can produce a transitional space of interaction between individuals and groups. In NGO peacebuilding, *transitional spaces* would imply the peacebuilding arena where different parties come together to contribute to the conflict impact mitigation. Communities of practice (CoP) engage, within transitional spaces, in interactive processes of problem solving strategies. In other words, a community of practice develops as a 'group-in-the-making' (Bouwen and Hovelynck, 2006:128) based on internal and external diverse conversations, interactions and common social actions.

Transitional spaces generate alternative discourses to dealing with the complexities of social reality. Complexity can be double-edged, meaning that it "contributes to the perpetuation and intractable nature of conflict" (Senehi, 2000:98) but at the same time provides opportunities for multiple interventions, variety of agents and dynamics of social engagement for change (Kriesberge, 1999). Oversimplification presents an apparent accessibility to understanding whereas in actual fact it fails to achieve a deeper perception of the 'other'. For example, in the critique of the liberal peace the *local* has been simplified through its *romanticized* characterizations (Richmond, 2009), *hybridized* validations (MacGinty, 2008) and *sympathized* rhetoric. These characterizations over-simplify the complexities of the 'local' in order to justify the arguments for or against its (local) inclusion.

Communities of Practice (CoP) as Peacebuilding Communities

In peacebuilding, relational practice entails building communities comprised of agents of peace. This process, in post-conflict settings, involves NGOs, local community, parties in conflict, donor agencies, governments and independent

peace practitioners. These different peace agents can be said to form communities of practice (CoP).

In an analysis of the structure of CoP, Wenger (1998:72-73) identifies three major characteristics which I will link to NGO peacebuilding. The first is the *mutual engagement*: The participation by community members into different social activities evolve into collaborative relationships that eventually establish norms that bond the community together. In NGO peacebuilding mutual engagement would refer to the different levels of interaction between NGOs and community; donors and NGOs; and donors and their governments. These levels of engagement contribute to peacebuilding discourse in many different ways.

The second is *joint enterprise*: the interaction between community members creates a common vision that is constantly negotiated in processes of reality construction. In NGO peacebuilding the joint enterprise would refer to the common desire for peace by engaging in different activities that promote peace and mitigate conflict. The *joint* aspect does not necessarily imply working in common but sharing a common aspiration for social change, even when working separately.

The third is *shared repertoire*: The joint practice of the community members produces a common narrative that becomes part of the community resources (whether literal or symbolic meanings) and forms the shared repertoire. In NGO peacebuilding the shared repertoire would include the resultant manifestation of

the different approaches to peacebuilding which can be conglomerated to a common resource for peace. The commonality is not necessarily characterized by uniformity but a variety of practices that contribute to different perspectives to peacebuilding and recovery from conflict.

Gammelgaard (2010:351) proposes 'virtual communities of practices' as a space where different practitioners can interact and engage in social exchange, and where "the communication and coordination of work take place in cyberspace through information technology." Participants take advantage of the virtual space to exchange best practices; facilitate knowledge retrieval; and minimize contextual gaps and physical distances.

The above concepts and perspectives in relational constructionism, as I shall demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, are important in understanding the relational aspects of NGO peacebuilding and the extent to which these relationships construct peacebuilding discourse and practice. The interaction of different actors in the peacebuilding arena generates a relational practice of peacebuilding that renews itself through constant evaluations that become 'lessons learned'. Stephan (2008:34) is emphatic that "(m)ediators and facilitators need to model the same types of behaviors they wish to have the parties to the conflict display." In other words, peace practitioners have to internalize the values of peace that they project to the community.

In my data analysis I applied relational constructionism to study how relational transactions, networking, power dynamics, social change process, motivations and reciprocities contributed to the process of construction of peacebuilding discourse and practice in northern Uganda. I have discussed these perspectives in Chapters Five and Six.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a framework for understanding interactive processes of peacebuilding between NGOs, donors and local community, and thus offered a basis for comprehending the underlying processes of NGO peacebuilding in the post-conflict setting of northern Uganda. Given that NGO peacebuilding is characterized by multiple actors, different power relations and competing value systems, it is important to decipher the complex reality of peacebuilding interactions within conflict dynamics. Such an analysis would facilitate the understanding of the processes of construction of peacebuilding discourse and practice. Failure to engage with the complexity easily leads to the generalized over-simplification of the post-conflict reality and the peacebuilding practice.

Given the diversity of actors in NGO peacebuilding, my interest in this chapter has been geared towards developing a theoretical framework that facilitates a tacit understanding of how heterogeneous groups such as NGOs, local community, international communities, donors and other stakeholders in peacebuilding relationally interact, work together, communicate, address their differences and discover new approaches to peacebuilding. Poole (1999:92) suggests that investigating different aspects of diversity in groups tends to

clarify “how different types of individuals ‘fit together’ in groups.” Thus, analyzing how individuals and groups (NGOs, donors and local community) fit together within dialogical spaces, competitive encounters, mutual recognition and misrecognition is important in elucidating the process of peacebuilding.

This chapter has also shown that processes of relational constructionism are marked with internal differences and power dynamics. Managing power at different levels of group dynamics is important. This entails understanding how groups interpret and understand power dynamics; and how in the process, they generate relationships amongst themselves. Thus, conflict, power and status are closely related (Sell, 2004). A general consensus on the use of power facilitates the smooth running of relations within a group, however this can at the same time generate different levels of inequality (Sell et al., 2004:48).

Power relations can sometimes be faced with situations of resistance and counter-actions. In social power relations, groups can resist socialization of power that translates to status and domination (Lovaglia and Houser, 1996; Walker et al., 2000). Such could lead to relational conflict between individuals and groups, as well as cognitive conflict, which refers to awareness of emerging differences in diverse viewpoints and opinions about the tasks (Sell et al, 2004: 51).

The process of confrontation can either take an affirmative action approach that reiterates agency or the negative approach that explores the oppressive impositions on the agency. However, Stephenson and Kippax (2006:403) are emphatic that neither of these two approaches are effective, hence their

proposal above on *transfiguring social relations*. Simultaneous interactions of different roles within organization can also mediate differences between parties in a group. In each organization or society there are complex networks of role-relationships that determine individual and group actions and the choices that are made in developing a common identity. From an organizational studies perspective, relational constructionism framework shades light into understanding the dynamics of NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict settings.

I will apply the relational constructionism concept in the next three chapters in order to understand NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. In the next chapter I will analyze Ugandan context from historical, social, economic and political perspectives while demonstrating how different actors engaged in interactive processes of relational constructionism of the reality of nation building, peacebuilding and violence. This will set the ground for understanding the discourse and practice of peacebuilding between NGOs, community and donor agencies in northern Uganda, which I discuss in Chapters Five and Six.

Chapter Four: The Northern Uganda Conflict

Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of northern Uganda conflict as a contextual background to NGO peacebuilding. I analyze the northern Uganda conflict within the broader conceptualization of different conflicts in Uganda. In order to situate NGO peacebuilding I examine the diverse peacebuilding efforts that have taken place in the country from colonial to post independence periods. My central argument is that different peacebuilding mechanisms and efforts have not fully addressed the root causes of Uganda conflict. The root causes of the conflict lie in the management of access to political power and control of political institutions that facilitate the power management and distribution of national resources.

This analysis is based on the assertion that the Uganda conflict is essentially political. Thus, the competition for the control of the state power, from colonial period to the present, is the key aspect that weaves different explanations of the Uganda conflict. This can be explained by: the tensions between ethnic diversity and state power; democratic participation of the mass population and the centralized power by the political elite; control of national resources by the political elite and the claim to the share of the same resources by the masses; and state-controlled mechanisms of conflict resolution through militarized

approaches and retaliatory militarized response from the 'opponents'. These political tensions have historically protracted conflicts in Uganda.

Northern Uganda conflict has cost more than 300,000 lives (Kisekka-Ntale, 2007:422), mass abduction of children, internal displacements (Human Rights Watch, 1997, 2003b; Amnesty International, 1997, 1999) and, increase in poverty, trauma and insecurity (Brett, 1996a). The most affected area is the northern region inhabited by the Acholi people, where the government, purportedly for security reasons, had since 1996, herded 1.5 million people into displacement camps, under very poor living conditions (Mwenda, 2010:55). The former United Nations Secretary for Humanitarian Assistance, Jan Egeland, described the situation as one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world (Dolan, 2009:23; Reliefweb, 2003).[42] There have been several conflict mediation attempts, and the most recent peace negotiations (2006-2008) led to a ceasefire and relative peace but the parties did not sign a peace agreement, further increasing the unpredictability of attaining peace.

The major contribution of this chapter to the general literature is the historical analysis of the conflict trajectories and perspectives in Uganda, while highlighting the contextual complexities and implications to the peacebuilding efforts. Most analyses of Uganda conflict, similar to analyses of African conflicts, tend to limit themselves to the post independent reality of the conflict or to most recent socio-political events. Such analyses, as I shall demonstrate below,

[42] Egeland made this remark at the end of his fact finding mission in northern Uganda in 2003.

have often made reductionist conclusions based on current phenomenon without getting into the depth of the analysis. Another important observation is that these generalized analyses are often not based on the perceptions of the people on the ground. In Chapters Five and Six I will complement the discussions in this chapter with the field research findings that reveal the people's perception of the conflict.

I have divided the discussions in this chapter into three main sections: *First,* I seek to demonstrate that the northern Uganda conflict is not simply a sporadic conflict between the Acholi people's LRA and GOU, but reflects much deeper historical tensions of control for political power and national resources. This has been the case from colonial to post-independence periods. *Second,* I hold that the post-independence period perpetuated the control of state power by political elite while relying on militarization of conflicts as means of achieving peace and settling differences. The challenge of nation-building, as a peacebuilding effort, lay in the capacity to integrate the aspirations of the different ethnic groups into a modern state. *Third*, I demonstrate that there have been diverse efforts towards peacebuilding by the government, NGOs and civil society, and international community through the ICC. I apply relational constructionism in peacebuilding to demonstrate how varied initiatives constructed a transitional space for a dialogical discourse as a means of bridging differences between parties in conflict.

Part I: The Colonial Government: Maintaining peace through divide and rule

Situating the Uganda Conflict

Uganda conflict, like many African conflicts, has been explained from different perspectives without linking the broad historical factors that are fundamental in the understanding of the conflict. The current literature tends to make generalized conclusions to explain Uganda conflict, and other African conflicts. One would thus read statements like: Uganda conflict has mainly been ethnic in characterization (Mazrui, 1969; Mamdani, 1995; Okuku, 2002). This argument has been used to demonstrate how the different ethnic groups in Uganda cannot live together due to historical conflicts over the years.

The colonial legacy of divide and rule has equally been blamed for the ethnic divisions resulting from ethnic conflicts in Uganda (Mazrui, 1969; Mamdani, 1995; Okuku, 2002). The colonial government mainly recruited the northerners into the military (Green, 2009:70; Dunn, 2010:54). Civil servants were mostly taken from the South where there were more educational facilities and commercialized agriculture (Van Acker, 2004:341). These preferential treatments heightened the North-South tension as I shall later explain. However, as it is the case in the North, different ethnic groups in the South are not homogeneous and have had their own conflicts in pursuit for power. The Buganda Kingdom for example, has over the years attempted to wrestle power from the central government (Mazrui, 1969; Finnström, 2008; Twaddle, 1993).

There were also many conflicts within Buganda Kingdom and the kingdoms among themselves (Low, 1971a, 1971b; Twaddle, 1993).

Others have held that “Africa’s civil wars conform to a global pattern that is better explained by political and economic factors as well as by the extent of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in the society”(Collier and Hoeffler, 2002:1). Economic marginalization of the North by President Yoweri Museveni has been explained as one of the major points of contention held by the LRA (Dunn, 2010). While Uganda under Museveni made positive economic and political progress with the help of financial support from the West, the wealth was not distributed to the northern and eastern parts of the country (Buckley-Zistel, 2008:71; Van Acker, 2004:337).

The lack of integration of different ethnic groups into a cohesive nation has been used as one of the explanations for Uganda conflict (Okuku, 2002; Hansen, 1977). Inadequate mechanisms for conflict resolution have led to militarization of conflict as a means of settling differences (Kabwegyere, 1972:303). Similar arguments have been used to explain how the nation-building processes in Africa were largely determined by the extent to which ethnic groups could co-exist together (Heynes, 2007; Rothchild, 1997).

The above explanations capture some major aspects of the history of Ugandan conflict. However, a more comprehensive analysis needs to take into account the different levels of complexities in Uganda conflict, and particularly in the

northern Uganda conflict, and the attempts at peacebuilding. It is therefore important to note four related *levels of complexity* in the northern Uganda conflict. The first level of complexity lies in the fact that a good number of the LRA combatants were children that had been recruited forcefully, and in some cases compelled to attack and kill their own family members in the villages. This meant that the ex-combatants were both victims and perpetrators. The second level is that the Acholi people had been victims of both the LRA and Uganda government. Human Rights Focus (HURIFO) (2002c:47), an NGO in Gulu, details how the northern population was caught between "two fires", the government and LRA, leading to human rights abuses from both sides. The third level of complexity is linked to the fact that the Acholi population had sons both in the LRA and Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) leading to divisions, killings, suspicions and victimization (Lino and Baines, 2007). This created a moral dilemma leading to a social identity crisis that reiterated the fact of the community being caught between the two fires. The fourth level of complexity lies in the fact that the shift from relief-development to peacebuilding presents the NGOs as the *giver* and local community as the *receiver,* hence *benefactor* and *dependent,* respectively. This is however more of a challenge than a complexity, but nevertheless projects an imbalance that, if not well handled could affect the achievement of the intended results of peacebuilding.

My analysis demonstrates that there are many historical, social, political and cultural factors that can explain the northern Uganda conflict. These factors are inter-related. It is therefore important to "interrogate the social totality of the conflict, paying respectful attention not only to political and economic factors but

to social and religious dimensions as well" (Dunn, 2010:56). This analysis, in light of relational constructionism, will put further clarity into the research question of my thesis: *To what extent is the NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda informed by the local reality and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding?*

The British colonial government undermined the inspirations for the formation of a united Uganda in three different ways: first was the divide and rule legacy that set different ethnic communities apart; second was the close collaboration with the Buganda Kingdom that led to the Kingdom's domination much at the expense of the grievances of other ethnic groups; third, was that economic and political policies of colonial government led to the marginalization of the northern regions.

Colonial Legacy of Divide and Rule

The early British interest in Uganda was mainly to safeguard the Suez-Canal, the Nile and the Cairo-Cape corridor which ensured a business link with the Cecil Rhodes' Company in South Africa[43] (Kisekka-Ntale, 2007:423-424). This was to counter the previous German treaty of friendship[44] with the *Kabaka*[45],

[43] Cecil Rhodes Company was one of the most powerful economic enterprises in South Africa towards the end of the 19th century (Legassick, 1974:260). The company controlled large resources of diamond and gold mines. The British colonial agents hoped to make lucrative business by securing links with Cecil Rhodes. LEGASSICK, M. 1974. South Africa: capital accumulation and violence. *Economy and Society,* 3, 253-291.

[44] In 1889 Kabaka Mwanga of Buganda Kingdom signed a treaty of friendship with the Germans (Gray, 1960). This was German's attempt to extend its influence in East Africa. However in 1890 Great Britain and Germany signed a treaty that gave Britain the 'right' over what was later to become Uganda. This was in line with the earlier Anglo-Germany treaty that divided East African territories between the Germans and British. GRAY, J. 1960. Anglo-German Relations in Uganda, 1890-1892. *The Journal of African History,* 1, 281-297.

[45] *Kabaka* refers to the title given to the kings in Buganda Kingdom. For example, Kabaka Mutesa would imply King Mutesa.

King of the Buganda Kingdom (Twaddle, 1993:70). Hence, following the Anglo-Germany agreement in 1886, the British acquired the territory and hurriedly "bundled the different ethnic groups together to create a single administrative colonial entity that later became Uganda" (Kisseka-Ntale 2007: 424), similar to the strategy followed in other British colonies in Africa. The difference was that in this case Buganda was recognized by the British as a 'kingdom' and enjoyed privileges that I discuss below. Other groups were only recognized as 'ethnic groups'. Thus, from the very beginning the British intention of bringing together different ethnic groups into a single territory of governance was not to found a country but to govern a colonial protectorate (Wrigley, 1988) for their own political and economic interests.

What is today known as Uganda was non-existent in the pre-colonial times. Different ethnic groups had their own nations under an independent system of governance, either in the form of kingdoms or chiefdoms. The region as we know it today was mainly dominated by the Buganda Kingdom, the largest and most powerful of the kingdoms. The Buganda constantly sought to expand its territory by use of force, often through the support of the colonial government (Southhall, 1988:60; Twaddle, 1993:66-87). The region was largely divided into Bantu and Nilotic groups (Gingyera-Pinchwa, 1989:49): in the South, the kingdoms of the Buganda, Banyoro, Banyankole and Toro; and in the North (and north-western), the Nilotic groups that mainly had chiefdoms - the Karamojong, Iteso, Lango, Acholi, Mahdi, Lugbara. The northern and north western groups are largely pastoralists and agriculturalists.

The British colonial government decentralized its government and introduced localized government under chiefs and kings (Mamdani, 1996:62; Low, 1971:144-145). Ethnic groups were confined to their ethnic boundaries. As a result “ethnic groups were politically kept apart from each other. There was no struggle to control the centre and the resources involved, because these were under the exclusive control of the central colonial government” (Barongo, 1989:71-72). The colonial government used this decentralized approach to power as a means of achieving peace between the central and local government, and maintaining stability between different ethnic groups (Barongo, 1989:71; Mazrui, 1969:155).

The British colonial strategy had three intended and unintended consequences. First, the attempt to confine different ethnic groups into independent territories latter became a major challenge to nation-building efforts. Without a common national language, other than English for those with the opportunity of receiving western education, it was impossible to develop features of what might look like a constructed nation. Second, the political and economic policies of administering the divide and rule colonial territory led to inter-ethnic tensions particularly in the special treatment of the Buganda Kingdom, and the North-South preferential treatments. Third, the colonial government in its efforts to form Uganda nation ignored the basic principles of social identity formation that demand that externalized identities have to be negotiated and not imposed.

The Buganda Factor in the Struggle for Nationalism

At the time of the arrival of the colonialists in the 19th century, the Buganda Kingdom was the most powerful and best organized in the region (Doornbos and Mwesigye, 1994:62). Their contacts in 1830s with the Arab traders meant that they were advanced in commerce and ammunition, and at one stage had a standby army of more than 6000 men who engaged neighbouring ethnic groups in constant conflicts in search for slaves and political expansion (Gukiina, 1972:43). As a result, Buganda dominated the region, increased its wealth through trade with Arab countries, as well as raiding smaller ethnic groups. This meant that the southern regions under the control of the Buganda had a much stronger economy in comparison to the poor northern regions, essentially creating a North-South economic disparity.

Predictably, the British chose to govern by use of indirect rule through the Buganda and engaged them in negotiations as a strategy to conquer the region (Southall, 1988:60). The privileged status of the Buganda in the colonial system led to what Kisekka-Ntale (2009:424) refers to as "Buganda sub-imperialism". The close collaboration between the British colonialists and the Buganda kingdom legitimized the rule of the former, increased the political domination of the latter, and created animosity from the other ethnic groups. The Buganda became the central administration point, privileging the southern ethnic groups against the northern ones, hence leading to the persistent North-South tensions (Apter, 1997:19).

The issue of the Buganda dominance and their exclusivist politics during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods has remained a crucial factor in the struggle for nation-building in Uganda (Doornbos and Mwesigye, 1994; Hansen and Twaddle, 1994; Mazrui, 1969). As Low (1962:66) observes, whatever happened in Buganda "was bound to influence what was to happen or not happen" in other provinces of the Protectorate.

The 1900 Agreement (see Box 1 below) between the British colonialists and the Buganda Kingdom gave the latter more privileges to exist as a mini-state within the region (Apter, 1997:83).

Box 1 **Buganda Agreement 1900**

Buganda Agreement 1900

The Agreement was between the Buganda Kingdom and British Protectorate government. The Buganda Kingdom was accorded partial independence and allowed to own 9,000 square miles of land under its jurisdiction (Low, 1971a:125). This land was referred to as *mailo* and was directly under the authority of the Kabaka and his chiefs, as opposed to the *Crown* land that was under the British protectorate (Nkurunziza, 2007:511). Some of the *mailo* land was already under the possession of the peasants who automatically became tenants of the Buganda Kingdom after the agreement. This led to tensions and power struggle between the chiefs and the tenants, particularly because the chiefs took on themselves the liberty to heavily tax the residence under their jurisdiction. There were also power struggles between the chiefs and provincial commissioners of the Protectorate (Okoth, 2006a:62). However, the Agreement stipulated that in case of conflict between Buganda and Protectorate, the Agreement took precedence over the laws of the Protectorate (Okoth, 2006a:62). Article 5 of the Agreement stated that "The Laws made for the general governance of Uganda Protectorate by Her Majesty's Government be equally applicable to the Kingdom of Buganda except in so far as they may in any particular way conflict with the terms of this Agreement will constitute a special exception in regard to the Kingdom of Buganda" (Low, 1971b:203). The preferential treatment of the Buganda in the 1900 Agreement created discontent among different ethnic groups who equally claimed for a special recognition, but failed to gain similar concessions as the Buganda (Low, 1971a:125).

Even though this Agreement was between the Buganda and the British, it had ramifications for the rest of Uganda, creating unequal relationships between the Buganda and the rest of Uganda (Okoth, 2006:63-64). The Buganda elite involved in the negotiations were favoured in the Agreement to amass wealth and political power by encroaching into the territories of other ethnic nations (Okoth, 2006:63). Buganda's close collaboration with the colonial government increased its territorial power and at the same time marginalized the grievances of other smaller ethnic groups that did not have a closer collaboration with the central colonial government (Okoth, 2006:63). Even though the ethnic groups from the North did not have centralized authority like in kingdom systems, they too had genuine grievances with the colonial government (Ocaya-Lakidi, 1982:300).

There was constant competition between the British and the Buganda authority for the control of the expansion of the Buganda territories in late 19th century, despite their close collaboration (Southhall, 1988:60; Mazrui, 1969:149). When the British sought to have a united East African Federation that would put together the countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (Apter, 1997:276), the Buganda and other countries resisted and the British abandoned the idea. The British further pursued the idea of a united Uganda, but again the Kabaka and the *Lukiiko* (parliament) resisted the proposal and this time claimed their own independence from the British (Mazrui, 1969:149; Gukiina, 1972:105). As a result, the British "withdrew their recognition of the Kabaka and his authority"

and on November 1st 1953, the Kabaka was deported to England (Gukiina, 1972:95-96). [46]

The position of the Buganda Kingdom within the Uganda nation has continued to be a bone of contention to date, sometimes leading to calls for secession (Doornbos and Mwesigye, 1994). This has further heightened the North-South tensions that have threatened the unity of Uganda as a nation (Ginywera-Pinchwa, 1989:49). For example, as recently as May 2009, a member of parliament and leader of Greater Northern Uganda, Felix Okot-Ogong, in his complaint in parliament against the government's nepotism and ethnicism, is quoted in the media to have said: "If the state of Uganda cannot accommodate the people of Greater Northern Uganda and treat them as equal citizens, then these people will one day find where to belong" (Ladu and Naturinda, May 1 2009). The dream secession-nation has been referred to by their proponents as the *Nile Republic*.[47]

[46] In a compromised agreement in 1955, at the return of the Kabaka, the British Protectorate granted the Buganda an internal self-governance status with representatives to the Legislative Council of Uganda (Gukiina, 1972:97; Apter, 1997: 367, 382). The traditional Kabaka was transformed into a constitutional monarchy, with elected members (Low, 1971:203). However, the Buganda Kingdom was to remain an integral part of Uganda. This was a swift turn of events that would generate aspirations for independence from the British rule (Wrigley, 1988:33). GUKIINA, P. M. 1972. *A case Study in African Political development.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press; APTER, D. E. 1997. *The political kingdom in Uganda : a study of bureaucratic nationalism,* London, Frank Cass; LOW, D. A. 1971. *Buganda in modern history,* Berkeley, University of California Press.

[47] In the same debate in parliament, another MP referred as professor Latigo insisted that the people of northern Uganda were ready to form their own Nile Republic (Ladu and Naturinda, May 1st 2009). LADU, I. L. & NATURINDA, S. May 1 2009. Anger, secession calls follow Onen's sacking. *The Daily Monitor*. Kampala: The Nation Group.

Economic and Political Policies: North –South Divide

The British colonial enterprise was largely motivated by commercial activities to support the empire. Kisekka-Ntale (2007:426) maintains that, "increased demand for plantation crops and greater supply of labour fuelled the considerable expansion of the colonial enterprise in Africa." The new economy introduced employment and money economy, leading to the marginalization of subsistence farmers and pre-colonial inter-community traders. For example, Sathyamurphy (1986: 30) affirms that by 1963, "The average Ugandan wage-earner was more than 60 per cent better off than the average self-employed African Uganda."

The economic disparities between the different ethnic groups have contributed to the North-South divide over the years (Kisekka-Ntale, 2007:427; Mutibwa, 1992:157). The South, through the Buganda, had an earlier access to commercial activities with the Arabs, besides the introduction of cash crop plantations such as coffee, cotton and sugar cane due to favourable climatic conditions (Apter, 1997: 181-182, 187). This situation, as I have noted above, advantaged the South over the North even before the coming of colonialists. In addition, the availability of mineral resources such as limestone, phosphates, copper and tin further enriched the region (Kisekka-Ntale, 2007:427). Further, Southhall (1988:61) asserts, the colonial government invested much more in the South by training skilled professionals and civil servants, and building educational structures.

In contrast, the North was impoverished with minimum economic activities, a reality that is still present to date (Dunn, 2010:53-54). The British colonial government chose to recruit its army from the Acholi who were labelled as 'warriors' given their persistent combat with their neighbours in the East, Karamojong, in the South, the Langi, and in the West, the Madi, besides the constant conflicts between the Acholi sub-clans (Byarugaba, 1998; Kisekka-Ntale, 2007). Other northern tribes were also recruited into the army. The British found it safer to recruit from the less centralized North which posed no threat to its administration in comparison to the more centralized South that had a clear chain of command through the kings (Dunn, 2010:54; Finnström, 2008:64).

The imbalanced opportunities for employment and financial facilities further marginalized the North. The majority of the population in the North did not have reliable source of employment (Dunn, 2010:54). Mazrui (1975: 35-37) affirms that for the people of the North, joining the army was the second major source of income besides agriculture. For most of these peasants, "a military career was their first introduction to Uganda as a national entity" (Mazrui, 1975: 39). The continuous provision of unskilled military labour led to the impoverishment of the North during both the colonial and the post independence periods (Kisseka-Ntale, 2007: 427). However, one can argue that it was the colonial intervention that brought economic development to the northern regions through military employment. Latigo (1997:1) maintains that at "independence in 1962, the Acholi enjoyed among the highest per capita representation in Uganda's Higher Education. This was primarily the result of investment by the many Acholi soldiers who served at home in Uganda and abroad in the Colonial

Administration." Nonetheless, the post-independence period has been marked with many conflicts and to date northern Uganda is seriously impoverished.

Part II: Post-Independence Uganda: Nation building and militarization of conflicts

The post-independence Uganda was faced with the challenge of peacebuilding through nation-building processes. Van Acker (2004:342) notes that this challenge was marked by "tensions between a developed centre and underdeveloped north, northern dominance of the military, and full or partial federal status for a number of southern kingdoms." This implied that the challenge for peacebuilding lay in transforming a state that had inherited a colonial system of decentralized power where local governments run their own affairs based on ethnic and district demarcations.

Following independence in 1962, the colonial government left behind a constitution that was meant to guarantee peace between different ethnic groups by granting, to a greater degree certain autonomy and independence to the kingdoms, and to a lesser degree to the district authorities (Barongo, 1989:72). However, among the kingdoms, Buganda was granted a larger autonomy, whereas smaller ones like Bunyoro, Toro, Ankole and Busoga territory were given less autonomy (Jøgensen, 1981:125). The constitution, as a peacebuilding tool, contained both the nationalist aspirations and federal autonomy as means of holding together the complex ethnic diversity into one nation.

The constitution making process was met with several obstacles, mainly linked to the tensions between central government and decentralized local government. These tensions later led to early post independence crisis. Mazrui (1969) points out that the post independence Uganda had two major issues that led to the political crisis. First was the *latent violence* between the different ethnic groups, and secondly, the *vigorous constitutionalism* as a framework for political contest. The latent violence was manifested by the persistent calls for Buganda autonomy within the new independent nation; the unresolved question of the *lost counties* of the Banyoro Kingdom[48]; the distrustful relationship between the Buganda and other ethnic groups; and the party politics that led to inter-party tensions in parliament.

The second factor that Mazrui discusses is *vigorous constitutionalism.* He defines constitutionalism as a "procedural approach to politics; a faith in legal solutions to political tensions; a relatively open society with institutionalized competition for power in the polity…" (Mazrui, 1969:147). The challenge for the post-independence Uganda was to negotiate a constitution that safeguarded equal rights of every ethnic group. This proved to be a big challenge to overcome. For most Ugandans the 1962 constitution reflected the legal independence agreement that was to govern the country, "a form of social

[48] Under the leadership of Fredrick Lugard, one of the major architects of British colonization in Africa, five other districts were taken away from the Bunyoro Kingdom and given to Buganda Kingdom in a formal treaty in 1900 in return for levies that were to be paid to the British (Low, 1971:143; Sathyamurthy 1986:106). These came to be known as the *lost counties* and have led, to date, to the persistent claims from the Banyoro to repossess their counties. LOW, D. A. 1971. *Buganda in modern history,* Berkeley, University of California Press; SATHYAMURTHY, T. V. 1986. *The Political Development of Uganda: 1900-1986,* Hants, UK, Gower Publishing Co. Ltd.

contract creating a new society, and the parties to the contract surrendered some of their own natural rights for the sake of the compact" (Mazrui, 1969:161).

Post independence Uganda was marked by competition for power and control, ethnonationalism and distrust. Rupesinghe (1995) notes that the problem for most post-independent African countries like Uganda was how to develop political institutions that had the capacity to reduce ethnic tensions and conflicts. There were tensions between the government of Milton Obote, the first president, and the Buganda Kingdom. These tensions led to Obote's attack of the Kabaka palace in 1966[49] and suspension of the constitution in 1967 leading to an autocratic rule; political parties were mainly formed along ethnic and political lines; ethnic and political tensions threatened the unity of the country. These events created major ethno-political rifts in both the government and entire country, and generated a militarized approach to addressing disputes (Behrend, 1998:429; Kisekka-Ntale, 2007).

Obote's suspension of the constitution and assumption of all powers to himself marked the beginning of violent history that Uganda was to experience. The interim constitution passed by parliament in 1967 lacked public support

[49] Following the tensions between Obote and the Buganda Kingdom, the Kabaka parliament, the *Lukiiko,* ordered the central government of Obote to leave the Buganda soil by end of May 1966 (Kasozi, 1994:85). Obote responded aggressively and attacked the Kabaka residence in what came to be known as the 'Battle of the Palace' (Mazrui, 1969:161; Kasozi et al, 1994:85). He suspended the constitution and parliament, assumed all powers and made himself the president and head of state. The Kabaka, Mutesa II, went into exile in 1969, and this marked the end of the political kingdom of the Buganda (Kasozi et al, 1994:87). KASOZI, A. B. K., MUSISI, N. & SEJJENGO, J. M. 1994. *The social origins of violence in Uganda, 1964-1985,* Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press; MAZRUI, A. A. 1969. *Violence and Thought: Essays on Social Tensions in Africa,* London, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd.

(Waliggo, 1995). The constitution and the rule of law were the basic mechanisms for peacebuilding. Mazrui (1969:152) explains that constitutional making processes and implementation was always juxtaposed by threats to violence. This constant threat to violence meant that the "immediacy of possible violence…compelled antagonists to experiment with other forms of conflict-resolution" (Mazrui, 1969:152) such as resort to court and other legal mechanisms.

In the post 1966-67 crisis there were series of coup d'états and military resistances (see Appendix: Table no. 1) that arguably became normal ways of expressing grievances and 'solving' conflicts (Behrend, 1998:108). Hence, as Brett puts it succinctly: "The gun rather than the vote has dominated political change in Uganda since independence" (Brett, 1994:78). This has led to the institutionalization of violence as "the main instrument of political control" (Kasozi et al., 1994:88). Kabwegyere (1972:303) develops a hypothesis that: "any agent of change *alien* to the people whose way of life this agent is determined to change radically, always uses violence as a main means to bring about the change." *Ethnocratic heritage,* as Mazrui (1975:51) would refer to it, trapped the country into a vicious circle of ethnic-based violence. Both the politicians and the local masses were held hostage by the ideological ethnic entrapments that were used to justify the violence. Thus, the above disagreements led to socialization of violence that dated back to the colonial period.

Militarization of Conflict

Key figures from the northern ethnic groups ruled the country for twenty four years, from independence in 1962 to 1985, and in 1986 Museveni, a southerner, took over (see Appendix, Table 1). Obote's government, mainly identified with the Lango ethnic group (Hansen, 1977b:92), became unpopular following economic crisis, loss of jobs, civilian repression, controlled political space and military oppression (Mamdani, 1984:28-29). Subsequently, Obote was overthrown in 1971 by his army general, Idi Amin, a northern Kakwa[50]. Amin's excessive power led to civilian massacres, oppression of political parties and civilians, and economic depression (Mudoola, 1988; Mamdani, 1984; Martin, 1988). Mamdani (1984:42) notes that: "As a result of the 1971 coup in Uganda, the army became the supreme organ of the state. The cabinet, now under a military head of state, was concerned simply with the conduct of day-to-day affairs…the predominantly civilian cabinet members were drafted into the army cadets." Amin was overthrown in 1979 through the aid of Tanzanian troops (Mudoola, 1988). The Tanzanian invasion of Amin was provoked by Amin's attempt to annex part of Tanzanian territory (Mudoola, 1988:285). What followed, as Apter (1995:162-163) explains, were a series of coups under the watch of Tanzanian Military Commission[51] (see Appendix, Table 1 for a chronological

[50] The Nilotic Kakwa people belong to an expansive ethnic group that exists in north-western Uganda, western side of the River Nile, but they are also in southern Sudan and north-eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

[51] Y.K. Lule, a non-Muganda and leader of Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) took over power from Amin. Even though he was anti-Obote, the UNLA was pro-Obote; after six months he was overthrown and Godfrey Binaisa became the president, dismissed the anti-Obote minister of defense, Yoweri Museveni (the current president of Uganda) and subsequently his (Museveni's) supporters in the army (Rupesinghe et al., 1994:152, Kasozi et al., 1994:129). He also fired the pro-Obote chief of staff. The Military Commission removed Binaisa and installed Obote's political associate, Paulo Mwanga, who paved way for the return of Obote (Mudoola, 1989:285-286). This marked the commencing of the Obote II regime. RUPESINGHE, K., RUBIO CORREA, M. & UNITED NATIONS, U. 1994. The culture of violence. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. Available at: http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=21038 (Accessed on 19

outline of all insurgencies), that eventually brought back Obote as president, marking the Obote II era.

Having returned to power, Obote organized general elections and his UPC party won amidst allegations that elections had been rigged in favour of Obote (Brett, 1994:85; Mudoola, 1988:287; Behrend, 1998:107; Finnström, 2008:67). Museveni contested the election results and opted to form a rebel group, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) (Barongo, 1989:82). As a result between 1981-1986 civil wars were carried out by "groups which believed that election result was fraudulent, that the Obote regime was corrupt and ethnically biased, and who were angered by the brutality displayed by the army during the war" (Brett, 1994:85). Obote's regime was accused of massive killings (Schmitz, 1999:49, Ingham, 1994). The so-called Luwero Triangle massacres, which I explain below, have been linked to Obote's regime (Mutibwa, 1992:157) and caused major ethnic rifts. Hence, Museveni's insurgency gained extensive popularity in the South. Subsequently, in yet another coup d'état Obote was overthrown in 1985 and Tito Okello, a northerner, took over, before he was also driven out by a military insurgency led by Yoweri Museveni (the current president) in 1986 (Twaddle, 1988:317).

Museveni's rule had a stormy start with numerous armed groups opposing his rule (see Box 2 below). Most insurgencies were formed by soldiers who had

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Aug. 2010); KASOZI, A. B. K., MUSISI, N. & SEJJENGO, J. M. 1994. *The social origins of violence in Uganda, 1964-1985,* Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press; MUDOOLA, D. 1988. Political transitions since Idi Amin: a study in political pathology. *In:* HANSEN, H. B. & TWADDLE, M. (eds.) *Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development* London: James Currey.

been defeated and returned to their homes in the north and north-eastern parts of the country (Brett, 1996b:206). The longest of the armed resistance has been carried out by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Box 2 **Military Insurgencies Since 1987**

Military Insurgencies

In Finnström's (2008:69-70) assessment, Museveni's victory did not mark the end of the war. Instead it begun another new era of militarized conflicts through rebel insurgencies. In the eastern part of Uganda the regime was faced with opposition from Uganda People's Army (UPA) between 1987 and 1992. This insurgency was crushed and some of the rebels joined other rebel groups in northern Uganda (Gingyera-Pinycwa 1992:22); in the West, the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) that opposed Amin got into agreement with Museveni's new government and ended their insurgency; splinter groups from UNRF, West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and the Uganda National Rescue Front Part II (UNRF II), continued the rebellion; in south-western Uganda, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) emerged in 1995, with their bases in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Like the LRA, the ADF were involved in massive abduction of children; within the same region, the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) was started, attacking the westerners from Museveni's region; in the southwest the Hutu militia (Rwandan Hutu) have in recent years attacked Uganda from their bases in DRC, giving Uganda regime the justification to pursue the rebels deep into the DRC (Finnström, 2008: 69-70). This has further added to the complexity of the conflict in DRC; in the south of Acholi another rebel group emerged, Citizens' Army for Multi-party Politics (CAMP), but it lasted only for a short time; the pro-Obote groups that were short-lived included the Ninth October Movement (NOM) and Force Obote Back Again (FOBA). The government has been suspicious of the formation and operation of People's Redemption Army (PRA) based in DRC. According to the Uganda government, the RPA has support from the local politicians in Uganda (Finnström, 2008:70). In the northeast, the Karamojong cattle raiders[52] are armed and often attack their neighbours.

The LRA Insurgency

The LRA has over the years claimed to be fighting against marginalization of northern Uganda, particularly the Acholi people, while on the other hand GOU

[52] According to a study conducted between 1998 and 1999 by anthropologist Sandra Gray from the University of Kansas, of the 300 women interviewed among the fighting Karamojong sub-tribes of Bokora and Matheniko, "virtually every one had lost either a husband or at least one male child to intra-tribal violence" (Gray, 2000: 409). Gray (2003) further notes that in 1999 the direct and indirect impact of cattle raids accounted for more than 70% of deaths among males aged 30-39 in the same ethnic groups above. Jabs (2007) makes a broader analysis of the factors behind cattle raiding and the impact this has had on the community of the Karamojong. JABS, L. 2007. Where Two Elephants Meet, the Grass Suffers: A Case Study of Intractable Conflict in Karamoja, Uganda. *American Behavioral Scientist,* 50, 1498-1519; GRAY, B. 2000. A memory of loss: Ecological politics, local history, and the evolution of Karimojong violence *Human Organization,* 59, 401-419.

has dismissed the rebels as a disorganized group without any political agenda (Finnström, 2008). Historically, the conflict is one among many insurgencies since Uganda's independence in 1962.

The LRA maintains that their aim is to overthrow the government and institute a system of governance based on the Biblical Ten Commandments (Oola, 2008:67). They also claim to be fighting for the end to political and economic marginalization of the North by the southern government, return to multiparty politics, introduction of constitutional federalism, promotion of national and regional peace and security (Finnström 2008: 122).

The economic marginalization of the North has increased poverty and affected the quality of life in the region. According to a progress report on Uganda's Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2007:12) there is an obvious economic imbalance between the North and the rest of the country: "The northern region has maintained the highest incidence of poverty of 61 per cent." Van Acker (2004:337) holds that, "The proportion of households below the poverty line in the north when compared to the rest of Uganda is not only low, but actually increased from 1997 to 2000, in contrast to other regions."

The GOU's decision in 1996 to confine the Acholi population into 'protected camps' made it difficult for the people to cultivate their land and rear their animals, while at the same time rendering them vulnerable to rebel attacks (Branch, 2007:181). The camps were typified by "intense government violence in the Gulu district" especially in "September 1996, when the government instituted its policy of forced displacement and drove hundreds of thousands of

Acholi peasants out of their villages into camps through a campaign of murder, intimidation, and the bombing and burning of entire villages" (Tom, 2006:181). Behrend (1998:117) is emphatic that the 'protected camps' had other ulterior motives for the government: "purportedly to protect the people from the 'rebels' . . . these camps served to prevent people from supporting Kony's soldiers, and to punish them for alleged collaboration with the LRA."

The resistance in northern Uganda was first carried out, in August 1986, by the Uganda Democratic Movement/Army (UPDM/A) that claimed to fight for multiparty democracy (Human Rights Watch, 1997:64). Another resistance was led by Alice Lakwena who was acclaimed to be a spiritual and charismatic leader with supernatural powers. Alice claimed her mission was to cleanse the Acholi people and free Uganda (Behrend, 1991:167, Human Rights Watch, 1997:67). She started off as a healer and a preacher possessed by the spirit that drove her to cleanse the Acholi people of all historical violence (Eichstaedt, 2009:15). However, with the attack of the Acholiland by Museveni's UPDF she formed the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) and the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF) in late 1986 to counter the government army (Behrend, 1991:165; Human Rights Watch, 1997:66). She had a large following in the North and advanced her army towards the capital Kampala, in the South, but was defeated in 1987 half way through in Jinja town, by the GOU forces (Eichstaedt, 2009:15). In the same year, the UPDA/M entered into an agreement with the government to end the conflict, but some of the discontented soldiers joined HSM and eventually became known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony who was also said to posses spiritual powers (Vinci, 2006:83).

An analysis of the mystification of the military struggle of the LRA is important in unpacking the justifications behind the struggle. The use of cults, spiritual citations and other mythical rituals to recruit members and create religious and philosophical justifications for the armed struggle is a common practice among a number of African militias (Francis, 2005; Omeje, 2005). Francis (2005:17) avers that "there is a serious military and security psychology associated with the purported belief of the militias in spiritism and occult practice. The use of charms and initiation ceremonies has a strategic military and war fighting purpose because they make the recruits brave, with a die-hard belief in their cause." Omeje (2005:72) supports this view and adds that in African cosmology "the supernatural realm is the repository of the spiritual powers necessary for individual and collective protection and security…"

Even though one cannot solely attribute *raison d'être* of armed struggle to the link between the spiritual powers and armed struggle, one ought to however consider the cathartic impact that this link generates in a number of African conflicts. Behrend (1991; 1999) explains how both Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony were perceived to posses spiritual powers which drove them to fight government forces, hence rationalizing their cause. Kassimeris (2006: 90-91) points out that "Kony's alleged spiritual powers are used to construct an image of omnipotence. He has created for himself a cult-like belief in his own spiritual powers" generating fear and doubt among his followers and opponents alike. Thus, the supernatural beliefs have had spiritual and psychological impact on armed groups to the extent of sustaining and prolonging conflicts in several parts of Africa. This is evidenced by the LRA protracted conflict, but also in other

contexts such as the Bakassi Boys in Nigeria and the Kamajors in Sierra Leone (Francis, 2005:17; Omeje, 2005:71).

The spiritual dimension of the conflict has dominated most of the analyses on northern Uganda (Baines, 2007; Van Acker, 2004; Behrend, 1999). These analyses emphasize the claim to supernatural powers inherited by Kony from Lakwena of HSM (Behrend, 1999:114); the institution of the Ten Commandments; the claim of possession of the ancestral spirits by the rebels, which in turn are said to protect the rebels from harm (Eichstaedt, 2009:79). Finnström (2008:115) points out that the emphasis on the religious aspects of LRA objective of the conflict has marginalized other important and legitimate social, political and economic concerns.

Chabal and Daloz (1999:86) assert that the LRA does not have a strong political agenda to justify their cause. They stress that the crisis is much more humanitarian than political. Extreme violence on the northern population through abductions, killings and stealing has compromised the LRA cause and led, in 2005, to the indictment order on the rebel leaders by the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Apuuli, 2008:803).[53] I would argue that while the conflict in

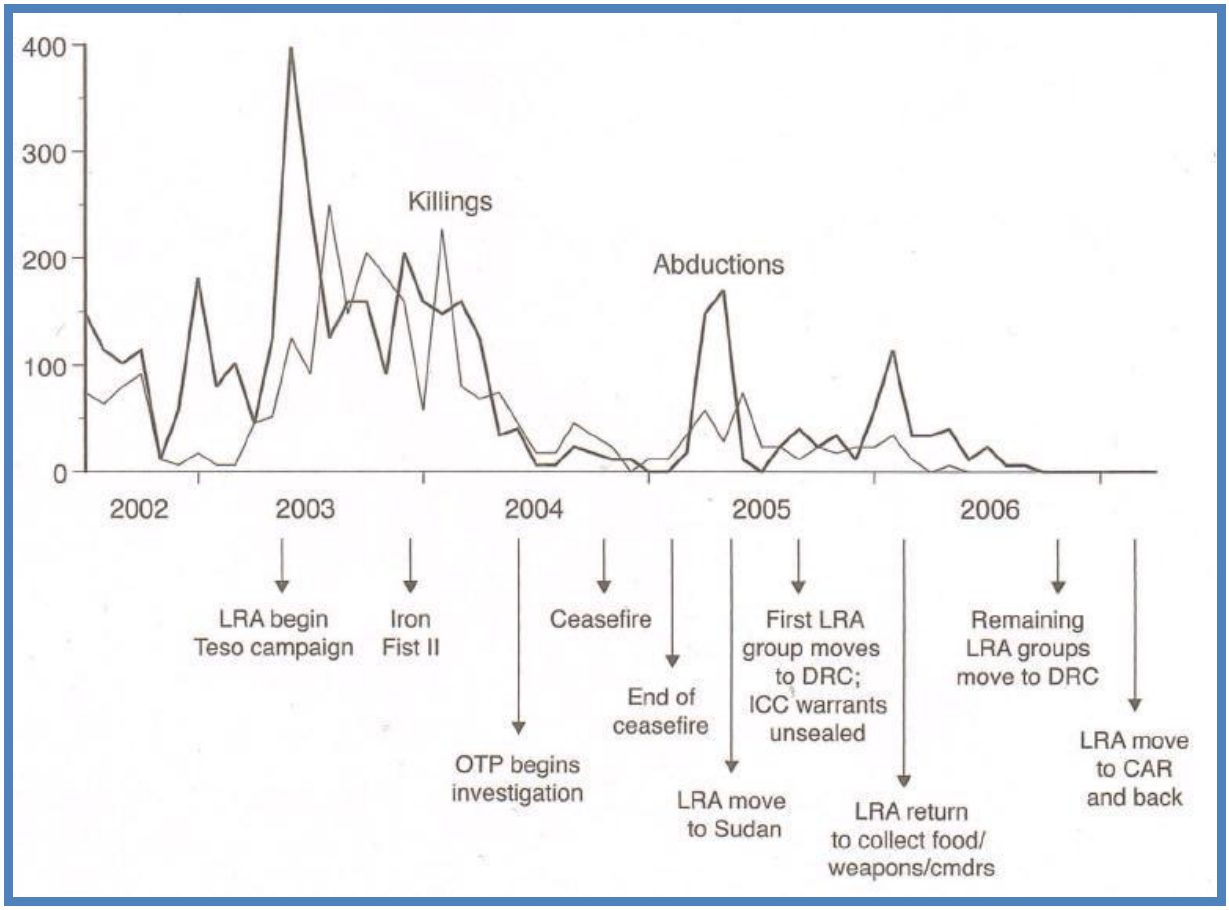
[53] Abducted children were abused and threatened by death or injury if they attempted to escape (Blattman and Annan, 2010:140). In fact the "LRA has become infamous for massacres, maiming, and the forced recruitment of thousands of Acholi, many of them children" (Branch, 2007:180). The rebels have cut off the hands, ears, lips and limbs of individuals suspected to be collaborating with the government. Children have been forced to be soldiers or sexual slaves of the LRA commanders in the bush (Tom, 2006). BLATTMAN, C. & ANNAN, J. 2010. On the nature and causes of LRA Aductions: what the abductees say. *In:* ALLEN, T. & VLASSENROOT, K. (eds.) *The Lord's Resistance Army : myth and reality*, London: Zed Books; BRANCH, A. 2007. Uganda's Civil War and the Politics of ICC Intervention. *Ethics & International Affairs* 21, 179-198; TOM, P. 2006. The Acholi Traditional Approach to Justice and the War in Northern Uganda. *Beyond Intractability.* Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/case_studies/acholi_traditional_approach.jsp?nid=6792 (Accessed on Nov. 1st 2010).

northern Uganda emerged as a resistance to military repression by the GOU forces, it gradually developed into a political agenda.

Another factor that is important to consider is how the Acholi and the northern regions have maintained a victimhood mentality that portrays the region as one that has been neglected by the government, economically impoverished and under situations of constant insecurity (Latigo, 1997; Okuku, 2002). The Acholi have been portrayed as "'biological substances', 'murderers', 'killers'" an indication that "the NRM/A did not value the life of the Acholi and wanted the 'Northerners' stereotyped for political gains" (Latigo, 1997:2). In other words, Latigo (1997:4) argues that the "Acholi are victims of the war, isolation, and circumstance." Such views have been countered by the southerners' position that the war in Acholiland is much more of a self-inflicted suffering because it is the Acholi killing Acholi. Besides, the North is often reminded of the violence it inflicted on the South when the northern leaders like Milton Obote and Idi Amin were presidents (Brett, 1994:87; Barongo, 1989:76).

The figure below shows how in 2003 and 2005 there were increased killings and abductions, however between 2004 and 2005 the LRA began to weaken because of intense attacks from GOU. The level of abductions and killings diminished between 2005 and 2006 because of the continued attacks on LRA, which subsequently pressured the LRA to participate in the peace negotiations (Brubacher, 2010: 272).

Figure 1 **Levels of crimes and killings carried out by the LRA**



Source: Brubacher (2010:273)

As I have stated elsewhere changes in events, historical perspectives and leadership have engendered new agendas in civil conflicts (Opongo, 2006:76-77). This is similarly the case for the conflict in northern Uganda. In fact, over the years this conflict has taken political, economic and social dimensions and hence broadened the conflict agenda beyond the North (Dunn, 2010:54). The rise in the cost of living and unemployment, largely attributed to liberal economic policies, has led to the general discontent amongst the population against the government (Mugwenyi, 1991:71, Eichstaedt, 2009:238).

The northern Uganda conflict has had regional dimensions, affecting mainly Sudan and the Great Lakes region. The expansive spread of the LRA into the unstable Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and conflict-affected Central African Republic (CAR) has raised concerns over the destabilization that the rebel movement has had on the region (Dunn, 2010:57; Eichstaedt, 2009:47). The LRA has been engaged in mercenary activities, looting and killings (Schomerus, 2008). Since 2008 more than 2,300 people in South Sudan, DRC and CAR have been killed by the LRA, and 400,000 civilians displaced (Rice, 2010). Human Rights Watch (2009:29-30) documented that the "LRA killed at least 815 Congolese civilians and at least 50 Sudanese civilians between December 24 2008 and January 17 2009." Several other villages were attacked in northern Congo leading to high numbers of deaths.

In an effort to pursue the LRA in Sudan, the Uganda military carried out several operations: in 2002 and 2004, *Operation Iron Fist I and II*, that both failed (Coghlan, 2005:80); and in December 2008 *Operation Lightning Thunder* which had intelligence and financial support from the US (Rice, 2010). The 90 day *Operation Lightening Thunder* failed to end the conflict but left many civilian casualties. The US government, in May 2010, signed the *LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act* which stipulates an expressive commitment of the US to eliminate the LRA; and in November 2010 the US government issued a strategic plan on how to militarily disarm the LRA (Arieff, 2009).

I contend that militarization of violence as a means of dispute resolution, and ascendance or resistance to power has led to enculturation of violence, bordering on what Mbembe (2003: 39) refers to as *necropolitics*, and defines as

"contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death." On the other hand, ethnic characterization of the Uganda conflict poses an insufficient analysis. As Doornbos (1978) has demonstrated, the ethnic dimension alone cannot capture the deeper roots of the Uganda conflict, rather it is the distribution of privilege and power that favours particular ethnic groups against others that tend to heighten the conflict. Barnes and Lucima (2002) point out that "the war in Acholiland is rooted in Uganda's challenge of developing a legitimate system of governance that promotes the collective aspirations of its plural society." Similar thoughts are underscored by Van Acker (2004: 336) who asserts that: "At the core of the conflict lies the failure of the consecutive Ugandan leaders to construct and consolidate a modern state that legitimizes and promotes collective aspirations…other than …divide and rule."

There are complex causes of tension affecting identity so far as existing sources allow us to understand, but these accounts do not elaborate on what people actually perceive. My analysis of the field research findings in Chapters Five and Six will shade light on the various dimensions of the conflict based on the people's perception on the ground.

Part III: Peacebuilding attempts in response to protracted conflicts

The above discussion highlights the fact that peacebuilding efforts through constitutional and political institutions failed to address the longitudinal and internecine conflicts in Uganda. Brett (1996c:203) articulates that the roots of Uganda conflict "lie deep in a history dominated by regional, ethnic and

sectarian exclusion..." As I have noted above, the means to resolving the conflicts, especially in the post 1966 period, has mainly been through violence (Van Acker, 2004:336). However, in recent years there have been attempts to resolve the conflicts through diverse peacebuilding mechanisms such as mediation, negotiations, legal mechanisms and use of culturally-based approaches to conflict resolution.

I will examine four main approaches to peacebuilding that have been applied by different parties in efforts to achieve peace and end the legacy of violence. First are the government supported initiatives for peacebuilding; second, post-conflict reconstruction through foreign aid; third, interventions made by the NGOs and civil society, particularly in relation to the protection of human rights and government accountability; fourth, the ICC intervention on Uganda conflict; fifth, culturally-based approaches to peacebuilding.

Government initiatives in Peacebuilding

The government has carried out several attempts to end conflict and create a positive atmosphere of peace and mutual understanding. When the NRM came to power it proposed a Ten Point Programme[54] as a guiding principle for governance and national cohesion (Dicklitch, 2001:183). The programme cited politicized ethnicity as the core of the Uganda conflicts and attributed this to political parties (Dolan, 2009:63). Subsequently, Museveni's NRM temporarily

[54] The Ten Point Programme referred to ten guiding principles, which are: promotion of democracy; security of all persons and property; promotion of national unity, and bringing an end to sectarianism; consolidation of national independence; economic sustainability; improved social services and post-conflict reconstruction; elimination of corruption and abuse of power; addressing root-causes of dislocation of different section of population; Pan-African cooperation in defence of human and democratic rights; and establishing a strategy for a mixed economy (Mutibwa, 1992:180). MUTIBWA, P. M. 1992. *Uganda Since Independence: A story of unfulfilled hope.* London: Macmillan.

banned political parties' activities (Dicklitch, 2001:183) and instituted a 'no party system' that favoured the NRM's monopoly of power (Dolan, 2009:63). However, in 2005 multiparty system was reintroduced and political parties were again allowed to compete in elections.

The major challenge for the government has been ending insurgencies through conflict mediation and institution of peacebuilding processes. Thus, efforts towards peacebuilding have included: institution of a constitution-making process that brings back the rule of law and citizen participation in the affairs of the state; peace negotiations with different armed groups; and introduction of the Amnesty Act, Human Rights Commission and National Reconciliation Bill 2009.

Constitution Making Process

I have discussed above how the 1962 constitution was the social contract between the sate and the people, and a principle means of conflict mediation. Barongo (1989:76) summarizes the Uganda crisis and the shift to autocratic rule in three different phases: first is the 1966 Buganda crisis that brought an end to political pluralism in Uganda, which was enshrined in the 1962 constitution; second is the introduction of an interim constitution in 1967 that abolished the kingdoms; and third was the government's imposition of one party state on the population which marked "the end of the politics of institutional and legal opposition and conferred an authoritarian outlook on the central government" (Barongo, 1989:76). Genuine options for peacebuilding were therefore limited to autocratic approaches to governance.

In the aftermath of protracted conflict that lasted until 1986, it was evident that there was a need for a new constitution in order to correct the political mistakes of the past (Hansen and Twaddle, 1995:9) and instil a spirit of nationalism. Kiapi (1989:91) is emphatic that constitutions are inherently mediators of national conflict because "they are like a peace treaty laying down agreed arrangements on how the affairs of the nation are to be managed."

In order to enshrine a robust and broadly consultative constitution the government, in 1989, put in place the Uganda Constitutional Commission (UCC) (Hansen and Twaddle, 1995:10). The UCC collected views from the population and came out with a comprehensive report with diverse proposal on what the Ugandans wanted in the constitution (Hansen and Twaddle, 1995; Waliggo, 1995). In describing the constitution making process, Waliggo (1995:28) opines that the UCC succeeded in laying the ground for democratization process and produced a report which was "centred on the aspirations and concerns of the Ugandan people and a draft constitution based on principled compromise." Moehler (2008:41) equally confirms that the constitution making process was participatory and widely consultative.

In order to promote participatory democracy, the new constitution reiterated the support for representative form of government based on decentralization of power to the local councils. The councils were initially referred to as 'resistance council' and in the 1997 Local Council Act they were changed to 'local council' (Saito, 1999:3).

According to the Local Government website (Uganda Local Government, 2011), the elected local government councils represent the highest political authority in the area under its jurisdiction. The councils are also:

> "corporate bodies having both legislative and executive powers. They have powers to make local laws and enforce implementation. On the other hand Administrative Unit Councils serve as political units to advise on planning and implementation of services. They assist in the resolution of disputes, monitor the delivery of services and assist in the maintenance of law, order and security" (Uganda Local Government, 2011).

Table 3 **Different levels of local councils at the rural level**

Level of Local Council	*Area of Responsibility*
Local Council - LC 5	District
Local Council - LC 4	County
Local Council - LC 3	Sub-county
Local Council - LC 2	Parish
Local Council - LC 1	Village

Public service is mainly provided by the sub-county's Local Council 3 (Saito, 1999:3) and assisted by the lower ranks of Local Council 1 and 2 (LC1 and LC2). At the district level, the highest authority is the LC5, mainly charged with implementing the district development plan (Kabwegyere, 2000:103). While the local councils have contributed to participatory democracy, they have in the past been used as government arms to monitor and control any government opposition, especially during the peak of the northern Uganda conflict (Branch, 2010:39-40).

Peace Negotiation Mechanisms

There have been several attempts to peace negotiations. However, the literature on the details of the peace talks is scanty making it difficult to do an elaborate analysis. I will limit my analysis to three major peace processes between 1985 and 2008, about which there is most information. These are the 1985 Nairobi Process; the National Resistance Army (NRA) -Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) Peace Talks; and the LRA-GOU peace negotiation attempts between 1993 and 2006. I have also highlighted the main aspects of Gulu Peace Talks and LRA-GOU Talks in the Appendix.

Zartman and Touval (2009:438) define mediation as "a mode of negotiation in which a third party helps the parties find a solution that they cannot find by themselves." They emphasise the importance of the acceptance of the mediator by the parties in conflict. In a closely similar perspective, the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) defines mediation as "a flexible process conducted confidentially in which a neutral person actively assists parties in working towards a negotiated agreement of a dispute or difference, with the parties in ultimate control of the decision to settle and the terms of the resolution" (Carroll, 2004). These definitions are however inadequate since the mediator can also be a group of persons who are impartial and not necessarily neutral. There is value in bringing emotions, bias, and passion in mediation processes as I shall discuss below. However, the difference in approaches would depend on the type of conflict in question and the internal and external dynamics in play.

Mediation is therefore a relational constructionism process where different parties engage in a dialogical process of mutual construction of a new reality of peace. It is characterized by dialogical conversations that are grounded on inter-subjective sense-making process that bridges differences and allows for exploration of different possibilities for peace.

The Nairobi Peace Process

The Nairobi Peace Talks took place in 1985 for four months following General Tito Okello's coup d'état against President Milton Obote (Okuku, 2002:24). There were two major parties to the conflict: On the one hand, Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M), and on the other, the Military Council under the chair of General Tito Okello, which was a coalition of former[55] rebel groups (Kiplagat, 2002).The peace negotiations resulted in a power sharing agreement in a coalition government. Under this agreement "a military council would govern and priority would be given to the reconstruction of a national army" (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999:9-10). However, the peace agreement collapsed within a year when Museveni's National Resistance Army launched an attack on Uganda army in 1986.

In his analysis of the failed peace agreement, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat (2002) notes that, the Kenyan negotiation team had not done a prior analysis to understand the depth of the Uganda conflict and the issues at hand. Their

[55] These included: the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA); Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU); The Uganda freedom Movement (UFM); the Uganda National rescue Front (UNRF) and the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA).

primary concern was to reach an agreement. Kiplagat also points out that the mediation team failed to engage the parties in informal familiarization dialogues that would have helped them get a deeper knowledge of the fears and aspirations of the parties in conflict. He adds that the team did not incorporate secondary parties to the conflict such as, Libya, Burundi and Rwanda who were implicated in the support of some of the factions.

Another factor that explains the failure of the peace talks was the lack of trust and commitment to peace (Okuku, 2002:23). While the talks were going on both sides were arming themselves in preparation for war (Mutibwa, 1992:176; Okuku, 2002:23). Museveni's NRM felt they were in a stronger position to defeat the government forces and on 26 January 1986 NRM marched on to Kampala and overthrew the government (Okuku, 2002:23). There was general lack of trust, particularly given that the parties had not interacted long enough to build trust and work towards a common solution.

The Nairobi peace process could have borrowed a cue from Fisher's problem solving workshops (PSW). In emphasizing the importance of engaging the parties in conflict, Fisher (2007:312) discusses the effectiveness of problem solving workshops (PSW). These workshops explore non-committal options, while weighing possible solutions after a process of mutual diagnosis. Kelman and Cohen (1976) underscore the critical contribution of PSW which include the following stages: at *pre-negotiation* the objective is to test the feasibility of the talks; *during the negotiations* the focus is to iron out specific difficult issues that

need to be dealt with; at *post-peace agreement* the aim is to work out long term strategy of ensuring that the peace agreement holds. Hence, PSW helps to strengthen the actual peace process by exploring options in a non-threatening environment, and further building trust between the negotiators.

The UPDA – NRM Peace Negotiations

My analysis will mainly rely on the findings by Lamwaka (2002) who details the UPDM/A-NRM peace negotiations by highlighting the major points in the process. When President Museveni's NRM took over power in 1986, the strongest rebel group that he had to deal with was the UPDA/M which was dominantly Acholi. With the endorsement of Museveni, a group of civil society peace team led by Tiberio Okeny Atwoma, an Acholi elder, went to meet UPDA/M in their hideout to invite them for peace talks with Museveni. UPDM/A was willing to talk, the peace team recommended amnesty for UPDM/A fighters, and the parliament granted it. Lamwaka (2002) ascertains that both parties in conflict consulted for four months as a way of building trust, and in March 1988 agreed to begin the talks. In the first round of talks, the parties appointed their military representatives to take part in the talks. The political wings of both sides were excluded from the talks. The parties agreed to a ceasefire and modalities of integrating former combatants.

However, in the second round of talks the elders were excluded and accused of closer links with politicians who could jeopardize the talks. These talks were based on a military to military negotiation. The parties eventually reached an

agreement in what came to be known as Gulu Peace Accord. The end result of the talks was that "the Gulu Peace Accord meant the final end of the armed struggle of the UPDA" (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999:15). The talks were therefore fruitful: the parties made an agreement to end the conflict; provide jobs for the former UPDA/M combatants; work out a joint military operation against the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM); and disarm the Karamojong cattle rustlers. Despite this success, Okuku (2002:34) notes that less than two years after the peace agreement some of the UPDA/M generals who had been integrated into the army were charged with treason, further raising suspicion over the government's commitment to peace.

To a larger extent these talks were successful, even though splinter groups from UPDM/A opted to continue fighting by joining other rebel groups. The success behind these negotiations can be attributed to a number of factors. First, the failure to build trust between the parties in conflict in order to explore different options in place. Burton (1969), while emphasizing the importance of understanding the underlying causes of conflict, underscores the pre-negotiation interaction of the parties in a process of analysis and exploration of peace options as a means of setting administrative grounds for the negotiation.

Second, the success of the UPDA/M-GOU negotiation can be attributed to the fact that rather than have an external mediator, they opted to have their own internally-biased mediator. This means that they did not seek an impartial mediator for the process. In a compelling and extensive analysis of 124 peace agreements between 1990-2004, Svensson (2009) makes a strong case

indicating that mediation carried out by neutral mediators tend to fail in comparison to those conducted by biased mediators. He argues that neutral mediators have as primary objective the ending of the conflict, and are thus more inclined to hasten the reaching of an agreement. By contrast, biased mediators (from parties in conflict) would ensure that the interests of their respective parties are met or agreeably compromised in an "elaborated institutional peace arrangement" (Svensson, 2009:447). As in the case of UPDA/M-GOU negotiation, Svensson asserts that biased mediators would have leverage over their respective parties and push them to make heavy concessions that would otherwise not be achieved by neutral mediators.

However, Svensson's analysis is only accurate to some extent since every peace negotiation process has its own dynamics, contextual imperatives, and internal and external factors. There could be cases where the stakes are so high that the biased mediators fail to convince their parties. In such stalemates the role of a neutral mediator coupled with external pressures from interested groups could be effective in pushing the parties to heed to concessions.

The third important factor of success in UPDA/M-GOU peace negotiations is that the mediators ensured that their party gets a fair deal in the agreement. Both sides worked out a win-win settlement: for the UPDA/M, demobilization, demilitarization and integration (DDR) of UPDA/M forces and job placements in the military; as for GOU, the UPDA/M would come in to reinforce the military forces against other insurgencies. This facilitated a power sharing agreement

that, according to Licklider (2001:706), is critical for the success of civil conflict settlement.

It is important to note that the UPDA/M-GOU negotiations came at the early stages of Museveni's regime, hardly one year after taking over power. He could not contain the numerous rebel insurgencies and needed a stronger partner (Van Acker, 2004:341). This situation favoured the success of the peace negotiations. These Talks however, focused much more on ending the conflict and integrating the UPDA/M soldiers, but did not address the historical question of inequitable distribution of resources, militarization of conflict, and political participation of different ethnic groups in Uganda (Okuku, 2002:37).

LRA-GOU Peace Negotiations

There are two major peace Talks that have taken place during the LRA-GOU peace negotiations. The first one was initiated by the government in 1993, the Gulu Peace Talks (see Box 2 in the Appendix), and the second, commonly referred to as the Juba Peace Talks, is currently facing a stalemate. The focus of my analysis will be on the Juba Peace Talks. I have discussed more details about the talks in Box 1 in the Appendix.

The Juba Peace Talks

The Juba Peace Talks started early 2006 under the UN Secretary General Special Envoy President Joaquim Alberto Chissano and the Chief Mediator for the host Government Dr. Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon, the Vice President of the Government of Southern Sudan (Lucima, 2002). There were hopes that the

talks could lead to an end to conflict, particularly following the signing of the cessation of violence agreement by the two sides. The parties also agreed to have a clear programme for the demobilization, demilitarization and reintegration (DDR) of the former LRA combatants through a process of Implementation and Management Mechanisms (IMM); Joint Liaison Group (JIG); and an Oversight Forum (see Appendix Box 1 for further explanation on the Talks).

The talks went on for two years and made some positive progress, but did not culminate into a signing of a peace agreement (Schomerus, 2007:34). Another key agenda in the agreement was on accountability and reconciliation, which was aimed at seeking ways of addressing human rights violations (both inside and outside the country) that took place during the war. The agenda explores both judicial and culturally-based forms of justice as well as reconciliation and healing in all the affected communities (Oola, 2008:68).

In my analysis, the LRA-GOU peace negotiations have been confronted by three major obstacles: the lack of trust between the parties; the international pressure for the success of the peace talks; and pressure of the ICC indictment orders.

The first aspect of *distrust between the parties* is attributed to the many years of conflict between the two sides. It took extensive regional and international lobbying to bring the parties to the negotiation table in Juba. Fisher (2007:313-315) discusses the *contingency model* of third party intervention linking the various types of interventions to conflict escalation. The rationale for this

approach is based on the assumption that conflict often has objective and subjective components. Hence, different interventions address different objective and subjective needs. The escalation model identifies four stages: Discussion, Polarization, Segregation and Destruction. The Ugandan conflict has mostly been at the *escalation* stage despite numerous attempts to explore *discussions* or negotiations. The perceptions between GOU and LRA have been characterized by the *polarization* of the North-South tensions, which have created an artificial *segregation* between the two regions. These have led to stereotyping and attempts to reduce the political differences to identity politics. Subsequently, "as conflict escalates, communication moves from direct discussion and debate to interpreting deeds rather than words, to threats and ultimately to direct attacks…" (Fisher, 2007:314). This leads to violent *destruction,* as in the case of Uganda, subsequently heightening the tension and mistrust, making initiatives for peace very difficult. However, Fisher's lineal approach to conflict analysis lacks depth in understanding the contextual complexities.

The LRA came to the peace talks while under enormous pressure. First was that several series of events had built up pressure on the LRA to come to the negotiation table. Following September 11th 2001 attacks on USA, the GOU passed an Anti-terrorist Act against the LRA in 2002, and gained financial and military support from the USA (Allen, 2006:74; Finnström, 2008:112). The Anti-terrorist Act identified three groups as terrorists: The Lord's Resistance Army/Movement (LRA/M), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Al-Qaeda. The government of Uganda was under the correct assumption that the USA, in pursuit for 'global security', would support any efforts against groups branded as 'terrorists' (Dolan, 2009: 53). Dolan (2009:53) is of the opinion that the Anti-

Terrorist Act limited the chances of any senior LRA officials engaging in peace talks. The Act also discouraged civilians lobbying the LRA to come to the dialogue table, for the fear of being accused of treason based on contacts with the LRA (Dolan, 2009:53). There was also pressure within the internal organization of the LRA itself as well as lack of clear vision on how to approach the peace talks. Jackson (2009: 326) asserts that before the beginning of the Juba talks the LRA lacked a "clear political strategy" whereas its political wing the Lords Resistance Movement (LRM) held divergent opinions on the talks. Over the years the LRA has had diverse representations, agendas and strategies. The killing of Vincent Otti, second in command to Kony, exposed the wrangles and divisions within the LRA. Vincent Otti was murdered when it emerged that he "planned to leave the LRA and settle in northern Uganda with generous support from the Ugandan government" (Cacaj, 2010).The Acholi Diaspora has financed the LRA over the years. However, their position, while influential on the LRA, has largely remained divided (Jackson, 2009:326). Vinci (2007) argues that part of the problem that the LRA faces is the fact that their original objective of fighting for the 'liberation' of northern Uganda has shifted: they have turned the Acholi population into victims while purporting to be fighting for a just cause for the North. This has subsequently led to the alienation of the LRA by the northern Uganda population; the LRA has been subject to diverse political interests within and outside the Acholi community; and their primary objective of the war has lost direction. Sturges (2008:209) argues that the disorganization within the LRA structure is manifested through "the apparent lack of political programme" and inconsistent communications channels. Jackson (2002:40) underscores the fact that: "The LRA is one of the most enigmatic of all movements in Sub- Saharan Africa, and it is not clear

whether it actually has any final goals." However, Vinci (205:377) asserts that despite the view that the LRA are barbaric and disoriented, they have a clear strategy of fighting the war and should therefore not be underestimated.

The above situation has complicated the process of reintegration of the formerly abducted persons. The youth that had escaped from the LRA were often afraid that if ever the LRA was to attack the villages they would be the primary target because of their perceived betrayal of the LRA cause (Annan et al, 2009:649). Vinci (2007) thus proposes that before engaging the LRA and GOU into a negotiation process, the priority should be placed on developing mechanisms of reintegrating the LRA and re-connecting them into the community.

Second was that Southern Sudan had an interest in stabilizing the region following the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between South Sudan Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan government, that ended the 22 year conflict between the North and South Sudan. CPA agreement led to the formation of the Government of South Sudan (GSS) and eventual referendum in the South in January 2011, results of which led to the secession of the South from the North. Southern Sudan became a recognized nation on 9th July 2011. The CPA paved way for peace talks between GOU and LRA in order to ensure regional stability. The initiative of the GSS received both regional (African Union) and international support.

The third aspect was the pressure of the ICC indictment orders on the LRA leaders (Noll, 2009:99; Jackson, 2009:320). As I shall discuss below, the ICC indictment cannot directly be attributed to the failure of the Juba Peace Talks,

but it can be analysed as a factor that put pressure on the LRA to participate in the talks. At the same time the ICC intervention is seen by the LRA as an encumbrance to giving in to the outcomes of the peace talks (Nolan, 2009:56-57; Eichstaedt, 2009:255). These events have not been favourable to the peace attempts. They have rather increased the tensions and broadened the scope of the conflict from local to international levels.

The above discussion illustrates the challenge of peacebuilding in Uganda, while highlighting the multi-dimensional perspectives of the conflict, historical and political impact on the society, and the need for appropriate transitional justice mechanisms for sustainable peace. These circumstances also emphasize the diverse challenges to peacebuilding in Uganda.

Government's Institutional Reforms

The government has undertaken a number of institutional reforms as a means of addressing the challenges of conflict. These include institution of Amnesty Act 2000, Human Rights Commission Act and Land Act. The National Reconciliation Bill is yet to be passed by the parliament.

In an attempt to create an incentive for peace, in January 2000 the government of Uganda, under the Amnesty Act 2000, offered an official pardon to all rebel groups (McDonnell and Akallo, 2007:119). The Preamble of the Amnesty Act (Government of Uganda 2000) underscored that the objective was to " provide for an Amnesty for Ugandans involved in acts of a war-like nature in various parts of the country and for other connected purposes." The Preamble further

adds that the Amnesty Act is seen as “the expressed desire of the people of Uganda to end armed hostilities, reconcile with those who have caused suffering and rebuild their communities...the desire and determination of the Government to genuinely implement its policy of reconciliation” (Government of Uganda, 2000). The amnesty was offered for crimes committed after 2000 when the Act came into law. Children over12 and adults who had spent more than four months of fighting in the bush were eligible to apply (Allen and Schomerus, 2006:37).

The larger objective of the Amnesty Act was to reconcile Ugandans, particularly those in the North, reintegrate the ex-combatants through provision of basic needs and prepare the community to receive those who had been pardoned. The amnesty was extended to those leaving out of the country as long as they renounced any military action again the government. The amnesty provisions indicate that once an ex-combatant has received amnesty, such a person cannot be subjected to the prosecution of war crimes unless the person commits other crimes. This perspective to the Amnesty Act could clash with the International Criminal Court (ICC) proceedings in situations where the ICC investigations show that some of the people that had been granted amnesty might have been among those bearing the greatest responsibility for crimes against humanity (Eichstaedt, 2009:60). As the ICC cases stand so far the arrest warrants have only been issued against the top LRA leadership.

To some extent the Amnesty Act achieved its objectives though it still has many challenges such as lack of sufficient funding, hesitance on the part of some ex-

combatants to present themselves for amnesty and misunderstandings on the benefits and implications of the Amnesty Act (Refugee Law Project, 2005, Eichstaedt, 2009:168). Allen (2006:122), in his interviews with the people in northern Uganda, found that opinions on the Amnesty Act were divided: while some people welcomed amnesty for the LRA perpetrators and subsequent culturally-based reconciliation rituals, others called for justice against those implicated in the killings.

The enactment of the new Constitution in 1995 led to the founding of **Uganda Human Rights Commission** (UHRC) under Constitution Article 51 (Bouckaert, 1999:43). This was officially ratified under Uganda Human Rights Commission Act 1997. Uganda Human Rights Commission has substantial independence with similar powers as the judiciary (Schmitz, 1999:69). The Commission has been active in advocating against human rights abuses. [56]

In response to the challenge of national reconciliation, the Uganda government, in collaboration with the civil society and cultural elders, advocated for a national reconciliation. This led to the proposal for a **National Reconciliation Bill 2009**, which has been drafted but not yet passed by the parliament. The Bill aims to address historical legacy of violence with an ultimate goal of instituting a

[56]The Commission has been active in advocating against human rights abuses. For example it reported that since 2006 "the right to personal property and freedom from torture" had been violated and subsequently topped the list of abuses (Kobusingye, 2010:81). Further between January and September 2009 the Commission reported that "there had been about 5000 human rights violations reported against the police and 3000 of them had been substantiated. The officers involved either faced disciplinary action, or had been handed over for prosecution" (Kobusingye, 2010:81). The Commission has thus prosecuted a number of human rights abuse cases. KOBUSINGYE, O. 2010. *The Correct line? : Uganda under Museven.* Central Milton Keynes: UK, Authorhouse.

national reconciliation process. Given that the final version of the Bill is not yet out, it would be premature to speculate possible impact of the initiative.

Another effort towards peacebuilding has been initiatives to resolve **land conflicts**. Uganda has attempted several Land Reform Decrees since independence. These have however been faced with a lot of resistance and misunderstanding. Post-conflict setting of northern Uganda has had numerous land disputes (Rugadya, 2008:7). According to Branch (2007), land justice in Acholiland entails, among others, compensation for the lost property, fair land policies and integration of the formerly abducted or returnees.

There is generally a high level of distrust amongst the Acholi population about the government's intention to commercialize and privatize Acholi land (Branch, 2005:3). There have also been suspicions that the government intends to displace the Acholi in the North and replace them with the southerners or Tutsis from Rwanda (Jackson, 2009: 324). The government's invitation to private investors to purchase Acholi land before all the IDPs return to their ancestral land heightened the suspicion on government's intention over Acholi land (Adam, 2005:3).

The 1995 Constitution made clear some of the key provisions on land ownership giving right to individuals or groups to own land or property (McAuslan, 2003).[57] The 1998 Land Act took away from the courts the monopoly of settlement of

[57] For example, "Article 26 of the Constitution provides that every person has a right to own property either individually or in association with others and further provides limitations on the state's power to compulsorily acquire private property." MCAUSLAN, P. 2003. A Narrative on Land Law Reform in Uganda *In:* JONES, G. A. (ed.) *Urban Land Markets in Transition.* Cambridge, Mass.: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy (conference paper).

land disputes and made provisions for the land dispute resolutions through "District Land Tribunal consisting of a chairperson, who is qualified to be a magistrate grade I, and two other members" (McAuslan, 2003:8). Further the land disputes can be settled by cultural leaders or a mediator appointed by the District Land Tribunal.

In 2009 the government drafted a controversial National Land Policy that was hurriedly passed by parliament but failed to resolve the historical problems of land tenured ownership, land disputes, women's right to land ownership and uncontrolled state power over land ownership. The National Land Policy has not adequately addressed the issue of resettlement of the IDPs and resolution of land disputes (Rugadya, 2008:ii). The post-conflict land disputes have mainly been attributed to disagreements over land boundaries and perceptions of increased value of land (Rugadya, 2008:34). In order to fund these institutional reform initiatives the government has relied on external donors who have in turn put stringent conditions for accessing the aid.

Post-conflict Reconstruction Aid to Uganda: A liberal peace perspective?

Ugandan government, in its efforts towards post-conflict reconstruction, has been a recipient of foreign aid since 1986 when the NRM came to power. For many years the country was favoured as a close friend of the West following the success of the implementation of the IMF initiated structural adjustment programmes in the late 1980s and 1990s (Mutibwa, 1992:193; Oloka-Onyango and Barya, 1997:114). As I have already discussed above, Uganda has for many years oscillated between peace and conflict, and its post-conflict nature

subsequently remains on the borderline between peace and conflict. Museveni's rule has been the most stable despite several insurgencies since 1986.

Uganda's economic recovery in the post-war period from 1986 has largely been attributed to donor funding (Mutibwa, 1992:193; Oloka-Onyango and Barya, 1997:114). For example, when the NRM came to power in 1986 "official development assistance amounted to US$200 million. By 1997…aid from IMF, the World Bank, and donor governments had increased to nearly US $850 million" (Leggett, 2001:193). However, Uganda has been so much dependent on aid that since 1987 "the total aid has exceeded the value of the country's exports. Similarly, aid has also exceeded total tax revenues" (Van Donge, 2003:289). Mutibwa (1992:193) notes that "while in other countries tax revenues amount to 20%-30%, in Uganda it is as low as 6%."

In line with the critique of liberal peace, post-conflict recovery aid has not pulled Uganda out of poverty or reliance on foreign aid. It has instead increased poverty and widened regional inequalities (Mutibwa, 1992:193; Buckley-Zistel, 2008:71; Dibie, 2001:180). Post-conflict recovery aid was conditioned on liberal peace tenets of institutionalization and liberalization such as constitutional review that I have mentioned above, democratic elections, human rights observance and maintenance of the rule of law. Leggett (2001:60) argues that the economic progress made in Uganda has been based on the transfer of development aid and "not on any fundamental improvement in the basic structure or capacity of the economy. Uganda is completely dependent on aid, and while dependency continues, so does poverty."

Donors have supported economic and political liberalization by funding government projects, including parliamentary and presidential elections (Dibie, 2001:180). Dibie (2001:180) asserts that the western economic support has given legitimacy to President Museveni's government despite its poor performance at home. He further cautions that: "As long as the West continues to give Uganda aid and support Museveni's limited political liberalization and substantial economic liberalization, Uganda is given external legitimization" (Dibie, 2001:180). The reference to external legitimation alludes to the government's priority to the western liberal peace agenda rather than the socio-political concerns at home. Buckley-Zistel (2008:71) makes the critique that, by providing aid to President Museveni's government "the international community perpetuated the economic imbalance introduced by the colonialists, contributing to deepening the fissures between north and south." In the same line, Shaw and Mbabazi (2009:84) observe that the current system of aid to Uganda perpetuates a "'two speed' liberal peace" that favours liberalized economies and markets in the South against impoverished North.

Uganda's failure to achieve sustainable peace and economic growth despite enormous amounts of aid has mainly been attributed to corruption, partisan and ethnicized politics, and lack of accountability mechanisms against those most responsible for economic crimes (International Monetary Fund, 2006:25; Dibie, 2001:178). Le Billon (2008) makes the critique that often in post-conflict settings aid is not well managed because of lack of clear structures for accountability. He observes that "liberal peacebuilding can exacerbate and transform corruption, to

the point of undermining its objectives of democratization and economic liberalization" (Le Billon, 2008:345). Shaw and Mbabazi (2009:82) are of the opinion that: "Over the last decade, the Museveni regime has successfully privileged economic over political liberalization despite some donor's reservations." Besides, as I have already stated above, by identifying the LRA as terrorists Museveni became a close ally of the War on Terror ideology fronted by the western nations, especially the USA, further entrenching the liberal peace objective of regional securitization.

It is in response to the government's failure to provide the basic needs such as food, housing, employment, security and human rights protection that NGOs have emerged as critical agents of social change in Uganda.

NGO Peacebuilding Interventions

NGOs have been active in conducting peacebuilding activities in northern Uganda. The protracted nature of conflict has led to grievous human rights abuses (Khiddu-Mukubuya, 1989:155) and NGOs have subsequently spoken strongly against human rights violations by both the LRA and government (De Mesquita, 2010: 121). These interventions have accumulatively contributed to the reduction of violence and expansion of democratic space. In explaining the role of NGOs in social change, Schmitz (1999:72) underscores that: "processes of political change in Uganda...during 1980s and 1990s cannot be understood without taking the independent influence of international human rights norms and their active promotion by transnational networks of non-governmental actors."

Human Rights Focus (HURIFO), one of the human rights NGOs in Gulu, in its 2002 report, “Between Two Fires”(Human Rights Focus, 2002b), documented how the Acholi population had been sandwiched by both the LRA and Uganda armed forces. The report shows evidence of violence by government forces through arbitrary arrests, physical abuse and illegal imprisonment. The government failed to provide adequate humanitarian support and security to the population. There were regular killings, abductions and maiming by the LRA in and around the villages that were said to be protected by the UPDF (Gersony, 1997:58). The most affected population is the Acholi from Gulu, Pader and Kitgum. Similarly, Human Rights Watch (2007) accused the Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF) of human rights violations during the forced disarmament exercise of the Karamojong community.

The NGOs have also advocated against the inhuman conditions in the ‘protected camps’: the security, health and psychosocial conditions in the camps were very bad, with regularly reported cases of rape, forced marriages, abduction of children and young adults, as well as physical violence by both the government forces and LRA (Human Rights Focus, 2002c). Camps registered high mortality rates of up to 1000 per week, mainly caused by malaria, HIV and violence (Integrated Regional Information Network, 2005), and half of these were children.

The Acholi Religious Leaders for Peace (ARLPI) (2009) who have been very active in promoting grassroots peacebuilding, and supporting peace

negotiations between the LRA and GOU, have criticized government's approach to conflict resolution through the use of military force. They have cautioned that militarization of violence in northern Uganda will not offer a sustainable peace to the region (ARLPI, 2009). Further, the ARLPI (2009) and other NGOs have also raised concerns over the ICC intervention on Uganda conflict. The ICC has issued warrants of arrests on the LRA leadership leading to the debate on the impact of this intervention on the GOU-LRA peace negotiations.

The ICC Intervention: International Mechanisms of Peacebuilding

Attempts towards peacebuilding in Uganda have also been carried out by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The conflict earned an *international* dimension when in 2005 the ICC issued warrants of arrest on the LRA rebel leaders named as Joseph Kony, Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo and Dominic Ongwen (International Criminal Court, 2005). This was consequent to President Museveni's request in 2003 to the ICC prosecutor to investigate the criminal activities of the LRA (Allen, 2006:1; Noll, 2009). No arrests have been made despite several attempts by the Uganda army. The ICC warrants place obligation on regional and international countries to cooperate in the arrest of the LRA's top leadership.

Allen (2010:244-245; 2006:82-85) points out that a number of institutions, organizations and individuals raised concern over the negative impact of ICC in the Uganda peace process: Save the Children in Uganda (SCiU) pointed out the fact that children were both witnesses and victims of the conflict, and could become an easy target for the ICC; Anglican Bishop Baker Ocholla, vice president of the Acholi Religious Leaders for Peace Initiative (ARLPI), insisted

that the ICC indictment would curtail peace efforts on the ground; James Otto, the head of the Gulu-based Human Rights Focus (HURIFO) maintained that the ICC timing was bad and that the mediation process and integration could be dealt with locally.

In a discussion about the possible impact of ICC on the peace talks, Jackson (2009:320) argues that "due to the history of the conflict the ICC approach is unlikely to achieve peace since there may be a significant group of rebels who will reject the involvement of the ICC, and also the ICC's inability to act beyond the purview of the Ugandan state, which has an interest in the outcome of any public hearing." Oola (2008:69) maintains that the LRA leadership refused to sign the peace agreement due to the fear over "personal safety and the ICC warrants" of arrest as well as lack of clarification on "the operational linkages between traditional *mato-oput* systems, the newly created Special Division of the High Court which is to be Uganda's domestic war crimes court and the International Criminal Court." Apuuli (2008:806) notes that "The Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation (29 June 2007)... was reached against the backdrop of LRA demands that the ICC drops its warrants of arrest. In effect, the agreement was an attempt to vitiate the effects of the warrants." However, the LRA was still apprehensive that the ICC warrants of arrest could be brought against them (Apuuli, 2008:805). These circumstances have dissipated hopes for the signing of the peace agreement, and the LRA has subsequently spread out and engaged in attacks in South Sudan, DRC and Central African Republic (CAR) (Dunn, 2010:57).

The extent to which the ICC indictment influenced the process and outcome of the Juba Peace Talks is debatable. In a survey conducted in eight districts in northern Uganda by Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Population (2007), 68 per cent of the correspondents believed that the ICC contributed to the pressure on LRA to participate in the peace talks. The ICC aimed at bringing to justice the LRA leaders who were implicated in the war crimes (Allen, 2006:96). However, the LRA on the other hand argued that the Government of Uganda equally committed similar crimes in the North and should be investigated. The ICC confirmed that they would investigate all crimes regardless of whomever committed them, though closer collaboration between the ICC and GOU has brought this commitment into question (Allen, 2006:96-97).

As a complementary measure to the ICC intervention, the Uganda government and the LRA signed an agreement in June 2007 that set out general principles on how to address accountability and reconciliation in northern Uganda (Human Rights Watch, 2009:15). The agreement allows the government to exercise jurisdiction over individuals who are found to bear the greatest responsibility for serious crimes committed during the conflict. Without further specification, the agreement provides for *alternative penalties* for crimes committed by the LRA (Human Rights Watch, 2009:15). The Agreement thus "proposed that justice measures drawn from the customs of the Acholi people and their neighbours should be officially recognized, and incorporated into Ugandan law" (Allen, 2010:243). In the light of this agreement, the Government of Uganda launched in July 2011 a war crime tribunal in Gulu (Oola, 2011). The first to be brought before a panel of three judges of Uganda's International Crimes Division (ICD)

was the former LRA commander, Thomas Kwoyelo, accused of atrocities against civilians during the LRA-GOU conflict. However, on 22nd September 2011 the judges ruled that Thomas qualified for amnesty under the Amnesty Act.

The ARLPI (2009), in collaboration with other NGOs and community leaders have proposed Culturally-based approaches to forgiveness and reconciliation as an alternative to the use of violence by GOU, and retributive justice advanced by the ICC against the LRA.

Culturally-based Approaches to Reconciliation

An alternative approach to responding to post-conflict peacebuilding in northern Uganda has been through the use of culturally-based mechanisms of reconciliation. The mechanisms have focused on the use of rituals in healing the wounds of conflict and restoring relationships within communities in the North. It is thus important to analyze some of these approaches and determine their relevance in the Acholi community today.

There are diverse reconciliation rituals among the Acholi. I will highlight a few which include: the *mato oput* (*bitter drink*) rite of reconciliation; *nyono tong gweno* (stepping on an egg) that is performed as a cleansing ritual on the returnees, especially the formerly abducted and former LRA rebels; *tumu kir* which literally means *the act of cleansing* against the bad spirits (*cen*) following a commitment of an act considered to be a taboo; *gomo tong,* the *bending of spears,* which refers to the ritual carried out between fighting ethnic groups or clans to mark the end to the conflict (Harlacher et al, 2006).

In *Traditional Ways of Coping* Harlacher et al (2006:59), in reference to northern Uganda, attempt to make distinctions between different rituals, especially those that involved killing and subsequent cleansing and reconciliation rituals. Killing is considered to be a very serious crime not only against an individual but also the community as a whole (Carlson and Mazurana, 2010). If a person has killed he/she has to inform the community immediately in order for the cleansing, reparation, compensation and reconciliation ceremonies to take place. This process is meant to reconcile the affected parties and to appease the spirits of the dead referred to as *cen* or *lacen* in Acholi. The "Acholi believe that *lacen,* the spirit of a dead person mistreated in the world by family, relatives or society, is an evil spirit (*gemo*) and is the most dangerous and deadly spirit." Hence, in situations where "someone has killed an enemy or a foreigner in a war, the cleansing would typically take place in the form of *'kwero merok',* an elaborate ritual for 'cleansing the enemy.' If a person has killed someone from a friendly clan, the cleansing would be performed in a *'mato oput'* ritual" (Harlacher et al., 2006:59). Clarke (2007:145) notes that a range of organizations have been working towards integration of these rituals into the reconciliation processes.

In situations where someone had been away from the community for a long period of time, there are special cleansing rituals to welcome him/her back. The commonly practiced ritual is the *stepping on the egg* referred to in Acholi as *nyono tong gweno*. This ritual is performed by a family or clan leader (Carlson and Mazurana, 2010:256). In this case the returnee steps on an egg to reclaim his/her innocence. The main reason for the cleansing is that those returning could have contracted bad spirits or carried out evil acts which if not cleansed could bring misfortunes to the entire community (Harlacher et al., 2006:66; Allen,

2006:166). If the person had killed, further cleansing ceremonies could take place, such as *mato oput.*

Reconciliation Ritual of Mato Oput

On 19th June 2002 the *Ker Kwaro Acholi* (Ker Kwaro acholi, 2002) the supreme council of the Acholi, under the leadership of the Paramount Chief, deliberated on the procedural customary laws of the Acholi "regarding reconciliation (*mato oput*), reparations (*culu kwor*) and other related matters." The law was promulgated on 1st January 2002. The declaration affirms that "This law shall be binding and apply to the wrongs committed within the jurisdiction of the *Ker Kal Kwaro* Acholi irrespective of whether the person(s) who committed it/them is/are Acholi or not" (Art. 3.1). The law stipulates the various measures of compensation for different kinds of crimes. This has changed from the previous situation where a council of elders would decide on the compensation.

Mato oput literally means drinking bitter juice from the roots of the *oput* tree. It can be defined as "a concrete ritual marking the peak of a process of conflict resolution, specifically referring to a killing that has occurred in the community" (Harlacher et al., 2006:76). In the Acholi customary laws (Art.43, no.3), *mato oput* is referred to as *blood compensation* and is mainly aimed at healing wounds of conflict and restoring harmony through forgiveness and reconciliation (Art.43 no.3).

Historically, *mato oput* has not been used in the aftermath of a war as is currently the case in northern Uganda. *Mato oput* was mainly practiced in

response to killings between clans during times of peace. The ritual comes at the very end after prolonged negotiations between clans. This implies that *mato oput* seals a peace deal. It is a ritual that concludes a successful peaceful negotiation.

In my interview with an Acholi Anthropologist, Dr. Okumu, (CM-G28, interviewed 03/03/10), I learned that once a compromise is reached and compensation agreed upon, the offending clan mobilizes its members to contribute towards compensation of the affected clan. In the past, compensation for a person who has been killed would involve pledging a girl for marriage from the perpetrator's clan as a way of creating a reconciliatory bond between the two clans (Allen, 2010:245). However, this is no longer practised. Once the community has been mobilized, a date is set when the two sides would meet and reconcile. Members from the two clans assemble at a chosen site. Once at the site the two clans are separated and the ritual leaders invite representatives from both sides who come 'armed' with sticks and perform a mock fight (Harlacher et al., 2006:84). The mediating elder holds a stick in the middle known as *layibi* (a long stick usually used to open granary).

Dr. Okumu (CM-G28, interviewed 03/03/10) further explained that that once compensation has been agreed upon, the mediating elders then invite both clans to bring the animals for the cleansing ritual: the offender's side brings a sheep and the victim's a goat. The animals are cut into two: the offender's side gives the head-side of the sheep to the victim and the victim also gives the head-side of the goat to the offender. The animals are then put together facing opposite directions. In the meantime the elders prepare a bitter drink made from

the extracted juice of the *oput* tree. The juice is mixed with blood of the slaughtered sheep and poured into a calabash.

Once the bitter *oput* juice is ready, the clans of the two families approach each other; the perpetrator and a close relative of the deceased are invited to kneel down with their hands tied to their backs; they then bend to drink the bitter juice (*oput)* from the same calabash. The drinking of the bitter mix signifies the willingness to let go of all bitterness, and reconcile. Once this is done, the eldest in the group begins to beat the royal drum (*bwola*) and there is jubilation and ululation to celebrate the reconciliation between the two clans. They all share a meal and restore their relationships.

Different variations of *mato oput* have been reported by various sources (Afako, 2002; Collaborative Transitions Africa, 2009; Harlacher et al., 2006). This poses the challenge of determining the legitimacy of the practice and the extent to which it is generally practiced.

Picture: Mato Oput ceremony - the drinking of the bitter juice of oput

Source: The Radio Nederland Worldwide Internet Archive (Oketch, 2008) and Centre for New Design in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS) (Jivani et al., 2007).

At the end of the *mato oput* process the clans could embark on the ceremony of 'bending of spears' referred to as *gomo tong.* This ritual was performed in the past to mark the end of a bloody war between clans, chiefdoms or different ethnic groups and it involved "literally bending the tips of the spears" (Harlacher et al., 2006:91-92). The tip of the spear would be bent towards the person holding it, which meant that the failure to observe the agreement would have negative repercussions against the violator.[58] To perform the ritual, the elders from the parties in conflict would come together, discuss the causes of the conflict, stipulate the compensation to be paid by the perpetrator then reconcile. In 1984 the Acholi and Madi performed a *gomo tong* ceremony to end inter-ethnic animosity and violence that had been sparked off by the fall of Idi Amin in 1979 (Finnström, 2008 cited by Harlacher et al., (2006:92)).

Mato oput has in recent years been institutionalized by the government, NGOs and international community (Dembour and Kelly, 2007:144). Some critics observe that the challenge of institutionalization of culturally-based rituals is that they can be co-opted into the liberal peace agenda (Andrieu, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2008; Taylor, 2010). In his critique, Andrieu (2010:546) asserts that culturally-based mechanisms of reconciliation are limited on how much impact they can exert on the society: the mechanisms are influenced by the local power

[58] From my interview with Dr. Okumu (CM-G28, interviewed 03/03/10) I learned that in situations where there was killing against one clan and mediation had failed, leading to sporadic violence and killings between two clans, further interventions would be embarked on to end the conflict. This would be followed by the *mato oput* ceremony, and end with the *bending of spears.* If the conflict was between the Acholi community and another ethnic group then the *mato oput* ceremony would not be performed. This is in contrast to the new law that requires that *mato oput* be performed for any crimes committed under the jurisdiction of *Ker Kal Kwaro* Acholi.

dynamics in their claim for legitimacy; and they can be patriarchal and gender-insensitive.

When applied as a local initiative the culturally-based mechanisms can be effective in mitigating the conflict but "they may lose much of their value when encouraged and programmed by the state or by international institutions…" (Andrieu, 2010:546). However, at the same time reconciliation rituals in transitional justice tend to create opportunities for dialogue and exploration of possible ways of mitigating the negative impacts of conflict and reconstructing relationships.

In making analysis of the role of rituals in conflict resolution, it is important to understand their anthropological and sociological impact on relationship building and how they create transitional spaces for dialogue and reconciliation. Rituals, according to Marshall (2002:360), have two main characteristics, *belief* and *belonging*. The beliefs within the rituals draw the community to deeper incisive comprehension of hitherto mystified and disturbing reality. This creates a sense of *belonging* and integral cohesion that is reinforced beyond identity. It creates a sense of: 'we are in this together and we will sail through it together.' These processes are all based on relational constructionism whereby the community takes the responsibility of reconstructing the society together. However, I would add that a discourse on rituals has to make an analysis on the extent to which rituals are practiced, hence accepted by the society, as well as whether their reinvention have a positive or negative effect.

One of the limitations of rituals is that they do not have provisions for crimes committed by the government such as, the looting of livestock that largely led to the impoverishment of the Acholi community (Weeks, 2002:35); and the government attacks and maltreatment of the Acholi population (Human Rights Focus, 2002c). These situations call for forgiveness and reconciliation between the community and the state.

The discussion above raises major challenges for NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. The analysis shows that the challenge of peacebuilding efforts in Uganda lies in tackling both the protracted aspects of the conflict and current post-conflict reconstruction challenges.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the historical background to the Uganda conflict while highlighting peacebuilding efforts that have been undertaken in the course of the conflict. I have explained how different agents have endeavoured to maintain and control power as a means to conflict resolution and how this has led to peace or conflict. The discussions have shown that the process of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in northern Uganda have been faced with the challenge of negotiating a broader peace package that takes into account historical complexities, social aspirations and plurality of identities. The inter-ethnic competition, colonial domination and construction of new forms of identities on the one hand, and the north-south divide and pursuit of social integration of different ethnic groups into a national entity, on the other, demonstrate that the 22-year northern Uganda conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Uganda (GOU) needs to be

analysed from historical, social and political perspectives. This conflict has therefore to be understood within the broader analysis of the Uganda conflict.

I have examined the colonial period with the interest of understanding the current structural, political, social and economic aspects of the Uganda conflict. The British colonial government used indirect-rule through ethnic leaders, thus assuring themselves of peace and stability with their subjects, and the subjects among themselves. The colonialists introduced the boundary system that confined ethnic groups to their regions of origin. However, this strategy of divide and rule was inconsistent and contradictory. On the one hand the colonial government was attempting to put together a territory that could be governable as one entity, and on the other it was instituting a system of governance that did not allow for inter-ethnic interaction that could form a cohesive entity. The divide and rule policy diminished the prospects for national cohesion in the post-independence period. There was thus a continuous process of political manipulation and ethnic polarization both of which were contradictory to any principles of nation-building.

In my discussion of the post-independence period, one of the major highlights was the rapid movement towards militarization of conflict that subsequently left minimum room for political negotiation. Violence was socialized as a primary means of resolving conflicts. Lack of dialogical sense-making based on common aspirations for a national narrative contributed to militarization of the conflict. Power was equated to the military prowess and state control, optimizing violence into what Mazrui (1975) referred to as *military ethnocracy.*

Conflict interventional mechanisms were mainly two-pronged: on the one hand the government and opposing groups relied on military power to settle their differences, on the other there were efforts toward peacebuilding. I have explained in Table 1 in the Appendix the chronological legacy of violence in Uganda since 1966. The LRA is the last major rebel group that has not put down its weapons despite several peace attempts. The 2006 peace negotiations led to a cease fire agreement that has brought relative peace to northern Uganda. However, the LRA and GOU never signed any peace agreement. Other efforts towards peacebuilding have included the institution of Human Rights Commission Act; Amnesty Commission Act; Land Act and initiatives towards national reconciliation through a proposal of National Reconciliation Bill that is still pending in parliament.

The ICC's issuing of warrants of arrest against the LRA leaders in 2005 arguably raised the stakes for the possibilities of the LRA and GOU reaching a peace agreement. Opinions were divided on the extent to which the ICC intervention had a positive or a negative impact on the peace process. The ICC intervention provoked calls for reintroduction of culturally-based mechanisms of peacebuilding. These mechanisms pay attention to reconciliation and reintegration of the former combatants and formerly abducted persons. However, the complexity of the northern Uganda conflict has raised major challenges for reconciliation efforts: the formerly abducted persons-turned-combatants were simultaneously victims and perpetrators; some families had children both in the government army and LRA rebel group; some of the formerly abducted had

been forced to kill members from their own families and village. These contextual complexities raised concern over careful sequencing between reconciliation and justice; forgiveness and retribution.

NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda, as I shall demonstrate in Chapters Five and Six below, is embedded within the above historical complexities and challenges of Uganda conflict. NGOs are faced with the challenge of addressing the diverse dimensions of the conflict, both the immediate and historical roots of conflict. To a large extent these challenges are beyond the scope of NGOs. However, as I shall demonstrate in Chapters Five and Six below, NGOs in northern Uganda worked with the local community and donors in a relational process of peacebuilding. I was particularly interested in understanding the extent to which NGO peacebuilding was informed by the local reality that I have explained above and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding. From a relational constructionism perspective, I focused on deciphering the various peacebuilding processes of relationship building between the NGOs, donors and local community, and how this influenced the peacebuilding discourse and practice.

Chapter Five: NGO Peacebuilding Approaches in Northern Uganda

Introduction

This chapter discusses the different approaches to peacebuilding conducted by NGOs in northern Uganda. The aim, in line with the research question, is to understand to what extent these peacebuilding approaches were informed by the local reality conceptualization of peacebuilding. The research seeks to establish specific areas of priority selected by NGOs engaged in peacebuilding; the approaches used in addressing the post-conflict challenges to peace; and the theories of change and impact assessment mechanisms undertaken by the NGOs. This analysis will reveal the NGO peacebuilding discourse and practice.

As I have stated in Chapter One, I conducted the research in two different sites. The first one was in Gulu where NGOs are active, and the second was in Atiak where NGOs are absent. In the study of the approaches to peacebuilding in northern Uganda, I was interested in finding out the extent to which NGO presence in Gulu or lack of it in Atiak was a factor in determining the local communities' conceptualization, participation and approach to peacebuilding. This was important in understanding the way in which the local people perceived peace, their commitment to social change and their approaches to peacebuilding. The analysis of these factors was significant in understanding how NGOs collaborated with the local communities in conflict analysis and intervention processes in Gulu, and how the local communities in Atiak

approached the challenge of peacebuilding despite the limited resources on the ground.

The conceptualization of peacebuilding within the framework of militarized peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts, have led to the generalized assertions that NGO peacebuilding serves the liberal peace agenda (Richmond, 2008; Richmond and Carey, 2005; Richmond and Franks, 2007; Paris, 1997). The findings from the local people's perceptions of conflict and peacebuilding mechanisms show that the context of northern Uganda is complex and does not fit these generalizations.

From the view point of relational constructionism, the study, as I shall demonstrate below, shows that peacebuilding is essentially based on relationship building as a means of transforming situations of conflict into opportunities for dialogue, mutual understanding, and change of negative attitudes and perceptions that have perpetuated the conflict. The *relational* aspects are evident in the dynamic levels of interaction between the different agents of peace within the local community in both Atiak and Gulu; and between the local community, NGOs and donors in Gulu. These interactions have generated a broad-based *dialogical* practice of peacebuilding. The relational component is also manifested in the end objective of peacebuilding activities, which entails restoration of broken relationships through reconciliation, conflict mediation and institution of a culture of peace.

Approach to the Analysis of the Findings

In this section I explain how I went about the research and outline the key findings, which I will elaborate in detail in the rest of the chapter. In order to understand peacebuilding approaches in both Gulu and Atiak, I began by asking the participants to explain their understanding of peacebuilding. This was important in gauging the different expectations of peacebuilding initiatives. These expectations shaped the diverse ways in which participants in both Gulu and Atiak perceived peacebuilding. In summary the majority of the respondents (36 out of 49) tended to describe peacebuilding as: relationship building that facilitates mediation, reconciliation and land dispute resolution; provision of basic needs; human rights advocacy; and support of national reconciliation efforts. However, the minority (13 out of 49) felt that peacebuilding was irrelevant because the war was over and what was now urgent was the provision of basic needs.

The above conceptualizations of peacebuilding set the scene for me to explore the understanding of peacebuilding approaches among community peace agents in Atiak, and NGO and community peacebuilders in Gulu. I asked the participants to explain to me the major issues of concern that influenced the various approaches to peacebuilding. The responses in both Gulu and Atiak varied but were mainly related to: resettlement of the populations that had been displaced during the war; reintegration of the formerly abducted persons; provision of basic needs (food, housing, education, health and vocational training, self-employment skills); land dispute resolution; reconciliation between families and clans; security of persons and property; support to income

generating activities (IGAs); advocacy against human rights abuses, and in support of peace and reconciliation efforts.

My next step was to study how the NGOs in collaboration with the community in Gulu, and the local community in Atiak, were responding to these social issues of concern in their various peacebuilding efforts. The study highlights three broad categorizations of the NGO and local community approaches to peacebuilding. First, *third party mediation in land dispute resolution,* which focused primarily on the resolution of land disputes; second, *human rights advocacy*, which aimed at speaking against human rights abuses by the LRA and GOU forces; third, *reconciliation and transitional justice,* which focused on reconciliation, peace education in schools, provision of basic needs, the ICC debate and reintegration of formerly abducted persons.

In Gulu, NGOs collaborated with the local community in supporting culturally-based approaches to peacebuilding, whereas in Atiak community members worked closely with the local community and government leaders. This was evidenced by the fact that: seven NGOs reported that they were working with the local community in conducting cultural rituals of reconciliation in Gulu; two community leaders in Atiak and three in Gulu affirmed their participation in raising awareness on the importance of reconciliation rituals.

The difference between Gulu and Atiak lay in the number of activities: in Gulu there were more peacebuilding activities due to the presence of NGOs. In Atiak

the community worked closely with the cultural and government leaders in addressing land disputes and other social justice concerns, whereas in Gulu there were more peace agents who included: NGOs, local community (cultural and government leaders) and donors. In both locations, there were attempts to use culturally-based mechanisms of reconciliation.

One of the significant findings of the study is that culturally-based practices were not widely practiced nor fully integrated into local justice systems at both sites. This finding was contrary to claims in some of the literature (see Acirokop, 2010; Collaborative Transitions Africa, 2009; Oketch, 2008; Murithi, 2008). However, in both Gulu and Atiak there were attempts by the local community to revive them especially in addressing the challenges of reconciliation.

In both Gulu and Atiak, opinions were divided on the impact (positive and negative) of the ICC intervention on the northern Uganda peace process. This led to debates on whether the community should opt for the ICC intervention or the culturally-based rituals of reconciliation. These discussions have contributed to the exploration of alternative mechanisms to the ICC approach such as reconciliation through the use of the cultural rituals of *mato oput* and other culturally-based mechanisms of peacebuilding.

I concluded the analysis by looking at the social theories of change behind community peacebuilding in Gulu and Atiak, and NGO approaches to peacebuilding and how they (NGOs) were assessed the impact of their activities

on the community, and on the peacebuilding discourse and practice. This was significant in determining the extent to which NGO peacebuilding was sustainable. I was also interested in understanding how the NGO discourse and practice of peacebuilding could be assessed within the challenges of conflict dynamics in northern Uganda. This was important in establishing the extent to which NGO approaches were informed by the needs of the local context. I linked these perspectives to social change with the local community expectations in Gulu. In Atiak my interest was to examine how the community perceived the changes realized by the peacebuilding initiatives.

Approaches to Peacebuilding

Perceptions of Peacebuilding

The understanding of what entails peacebuilding was divergent among the informants. Peacebuilding was conceived as a broadly encompassing phenomenon that was embedded in processes that help communities recover from conflict. Five broad conceptualizations of peacebuilding emerged: the *first* was that peacebuilding was seen as part of the process of relationship building for social cohesion: the primary concern here was that the protracted conflict in northern Uganda had led to family and clan conflicts within the Acholi community, and between the Acholi and neighbouring ethnic groups. These conflicts have resulted in disintegration of the social and cultural fabric. The desire of most informants in both Gulu and Atiak was to address the urgent need of reinforcing the current initiatives for peace and exploring other possibilities of reconciling communities.

The *second* was the perception of peacebuilding as a component of basic needs provision. Both the local community participants and NGOs acknowledged the fact that peacebuilding initiatives had to be concerned with people's livelihoods as part of conflict recovery. In Atiak the needs were much higher given the impoverished nature of the location. However, participants in both Gulu and Atiak underscored basic needs provision as an issue of primary concern.

Third was the understanding of the interpretation of peace as absence of war. Some participants felt that peace had returned to northern Uganda and NGOs should therefore not carry out any peacebuilding activities. These participants were emphatic that the NGOs should instead focus on building schools and hospitals, and initiating income generating activities. This view was linked to the fact that since the 2006 cease fire agreement between the LRA and GOU, northern Uganda had experienced peace. Hence, priority should shift to more urgent needs. However, such views were held by a small number of people, but I considered them to be important because they expressed the people's preoccupation with what they considered to be the most pressing needs. These views also revealed how the population in Gulu had substituted government's responsibility of provision of social services to NGOs. This was attributed to many years of NGOs' role of providing humanitarian assistance in the displaced camps. Participants who held this position were mainly from Gulu. In contrast, participants in Atiak were emphatic that *real* peace was yet to be achieved. They underlined the fact that past ceasefires had failed. Besides, the proximity

of their location to the Sudan border from where the LRA had often attacked rendered them vulnerable to future attacks. They were therefore more pessimistic about the 'return of peace' in northern Uganda.

The *fourth* was that peacebuilding was understood as advocacy through campaigns against human rights abuse and in support of the marginalized within the community such as teenage mothers, the old and other vulnerable categories. This approach was more strongly held in Gulu than Atiak. The presence of NGOs in Gulu intensified the advocacy activities particularly given that NGOs had national, regional and international networks to pursue the advocacy agenda. In Atiak the community mostly relied on cultural and government leaders as well as charismatic individuals to voice their concerns.

The *fifth* conceptualization was a broader understanding of peacebuilding as part of the discourse of national reconciliation. Twelve participants (out of twenty seven) from the NGO sample referred to the neglect and impoverishment of the North by the central government as one of the root causes of the conflict. Similar sentiments were shared by the focus group participants in Gulu and Atiak. The rest of the participants referred to other aspects as root causes, such as historical militarization of conflict that has led to a culture of violence; ethnicized politics that is seen as responsible for the North-South divide; and lack of efforts towards a national reconciliation. A good number of NGOs (12 out of 20) contributed to the discourse of National Reconciliation Bill 2009, which is yet to be passed by parliament. Nineteen out of twenty seven NGO

participants emphasized the aspect of reconciliation as key to achieving peace. These perceptions were also expressed by community members in both Gulu and Atiak, and among government and community leaders. However, other participants, in both Gulu and Atiak, were of the opinion that national reconciliation should be accompanied by punishment on those who had committed heinous crimes during the conflict.

The above perceptions of peacebuilding indicate how NGO and community peacebuilding was conducted in a diverse terrain of expectations. These conceptualizations influenced the people's participation and appreciation of NGO peacebuilding activities. At the same time these perceptions were not mutually exclusive. In many ways they complemented each other and informed the different processes of peacebuilding activities.

I will now discuss the broad perspectives of NGO and community peacebuilding based on the empirical evidence from Gulu and Atiak. These are: *third party mediation in land dispute resolution; human rights advocacy;* and *reconciliation and transitional justice.*

Part I: Third Party Mediation in Land Dispute Resolution

The post-conflict setting of northern Uganda experienced new challenges of addressing emergent non-militarized conflicts. The conflicts were episodic and included land dispute resolution, advocacies against human rights abuses,

psychosocial support, provision of basic needs to the vulnerable and marginalized, and integration of formerly abducted children. I have already discussed most of these issues above and will further expand on them in Chapter Six. In this section I will mainly analyze land dispute resolution.

Land dispute resolution

The problem of land disputes emerged as one of the major concerns in peacebuilding efforts in both Gulu and Atiak. Most organizations engaged in peacebuilding affirmed that they were conducting land dispute resolution through the training of mediators within the community. Both the government and cultural leaders played an important role in addressing the land conflicts.

Land disputes were experienced in varying degrees in both Gulu and Atiak. Gulu, being a large town and the capital of northern Uganda, had more land dispute cases. Its strategic location meant that there were large numbers of returnees and individuals interested in either resettling into the region or purchasing land. The remoteness of Atiak location meant that the competition for land was low. Land dispute cases in Atiak were mainly within or between families, and were low in number. There was a positive appreciation of the role played by local government and cultural leaders. While in both locations the cultural and government leaders were actively involved in addressing the land disputes, in Gulu the leaders had the advantage of receiving training in mediation and legal interpretation of land laws. This meant that in the Gulu area land dispute interventions were expedited because of the large presence of

trained mediators. Besides, NGOs had also trained paralegals who became fundamental in helping the community interpret land laws.

There are several reasons why land was a major issue of concern in both Gulu and Atiak. The primary cause was the mass displacement during the 22 year period of war. Many families abandoned their ancestral land. Traditionally families and clans used particular types of plants or trees to mark land boundaries. Due to the long periods away from home the boundary demarcations had disappeared. Dispute over what should be the correct boundary led to conflicts amongst and between families and clans. Even in situations where the boundaries were still evident, some of the earlier returnees to the ancestral land altered the boundaries (LNGO-PO32, interviewed 25/01/10 and LNGO-PC50 interviewed 12/03/10). These situations created conflicts especially when other families and clans members returned.

Children who had been born in the displacement camps and had lost both parents relied on relatives to reveal to them the location and boundary of their ancestral land. In some cases, as reported by one community participant in Gulu, relatives took advantage of the situation and appropriated sections of the land (CM-G51, interviewed 10/03/10). Later on when children came to discover the truth from other relatives, there was conflict between the orphans and the relatives who had appropriated land.

According to a peace coordinator of a local NGO, the illegal practice by the Acholi Diaspora and recent returnees of 'buying' land in Gulu at a throw away price contributed to the land conflicts (LNGO-PC50, interviewed 12/03/10). In reference to a family that had sold out land, a peacebuilding coordinator of a local NGO observed, "for a family that has spent most of its life in the camps under dire deprivation, facing the reality of acquiring Uganda shillings 2 million (£600) from the sale of land is simply overwhelming" (LNGO-PC006, interviewed 15/02/10). The participant added that once the family got the payment there were conflicts over how the money should be divided.

In Gulu, competition for the economic value of land, according to a programme officer from an international NGO, contributed to land disputes, particularly given that land was the main source of food production (INGO-PO34, interviewed 10/02/10). Several families had gradually started using land for agricultural farming. Four NGOs involved in agricultural activities affirmed that they had supplied inputs to the communities to begin farming. The harvest from the farms increased the wealth of the families that had tilled large portions of land. Given the proximity to the Sudan border, some families opted to exploit the Sudan market and sell their produce across the border. This practice however, rapidly reduced the local quantities of food supply (INGO-PO36, interviewed 16/01/10).

There were situations in Gulu where family disputes arose over the control of money from the harvest. In most cases women had spent more time working in

the farms, but it was the men who looked for the external market in Sudan. In these situations women were left empty handed. A 56 year old community participant from Gulu asserted: "I have spent so much time and energy growing millet and before it could be fully ready my husband had already found someone to buy the harvest. He negotiated the price and sold the whole harvest leaving the family with nothing to eat" (CM-G62, interviewed 16/02/2010). In a similar perspective a woman from Atiak narrated how her elder brother left her to do all the farming and insisted on controlling the sale of the produce (CM-A68, interviewed 17/02/10). This participant however reiterated that she would involve the police next time this happens.

Some women initiated what Kandiyoti (1988) refers to as "patriarchal bargaining" [59] in order to gain access to the income from the harvest. They negotiated with their husbands so that they could also sell the harvest in the local markets, and have a share of the money. Additionally, they invited their husbands to participate in income generating workshops where participants were taught how to manage their projects in mutual trust. Four out of nine community participants in Gulu claimed that this approach had a positive change of perspective on their husbands. The women thus displayed patriarchal bargaining as a means of resisting the male dominance and reclaiming control over the income from the harvest. The rest of the participants had mixed opinions on how to handle the issue. There were those who emphasized that

[59] Kandiyoti (1988) asserts that women are often subjected to the 'rule of the game' within cultural settings that favour the patriarchy. In these situations women find ways of resistance, actively or passively. She affirms that: "These patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts" (Kandiyoti, 1988:275). KANDIYOTI, D. 1988. Bargaining With Patriarchy. *Gender & Society,* 2, 274-290.

the husband should be the one to give the final decision whereas others preferred a more negotiable approach.

The communities in both Gulu and Atiak applied alternative land dispute resolution (ADR) to resolve land conflicts. ADR can generally be defined as "informal dispute resolution processes in which the parties meet with a professional third party who helps them resolve their dispute in a way that is less formal and often more consensual than is done in the courts" (Spangler, 2003). The application of ADR in northern Uganda kept the same principles but was rather rudimentary. It mainly involved the local government, cultural leaders, trained paralegals and NGO peace coordinators. In Atiak, as I have noted above, ADR was carried out by the local government and cultural leaders.

As third party mediators, NGO peace coordinators and cultural leaders realized that the judicial system in northern Uganda was slow and overwhelmed with cases. It was obvious that the courts did not have the capacity to deal with all the cases. Besides, the court system approach led to intensified rivalries between families, and by the time the case was over, relationships between the parties in dispute were fractured. A participant from a local NGO observed:

> *"We have established, in collaboration with the local council, land conflict committees. These are people that have been selected from five major categories: cultural leaders who include clan elders, clan chiefs, and respectable personalities within the community; sub-county land committee; sub-county land authority; land registration office; and local councillors"* (LNGO – PC 32, interviewed 25/01/10).

Those trained in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) acted as bridges between the disputants, as well as between the legal systems and alternative dispute

resolution approaches. For cases that the trainees could not handle, the NGOs consulted legal experts for professional advice. In Atiak, there were no legal experts in situations where the local government and cultural leaders failed to resolve land conflicts. The parties in conflict had a choice to reach a compromise or refer the case to the local tribunal. In fact, the above three cases were referred to the local tribunal after the parties failed to reach a compromise in an ADR session.

The findings show a remarkable success in the application of ADR in land disputes. For example, a peace coordinator from an international NGO affirmed that:

> *"In Pader we have registered a lot of success. When we went there to intervene in land conflicts, there were 228 land dispute cases in court. After our community intervention and proposal for settlement of the conflict out of court, most of the cases were withdrawn and only two were still in court. People began to trust in our approach because we focused on bringing the people together to talk and find a common solution that was good for their families and community at large"* (INGO-PC48, interviewed 19/03/10).

In Atiak similar success was noted particularly in appreciation of the local government and cultural leaders' role in mediating land disputes. A community participant from Atiak asserted that:

> *"...we often refer to the local council and elders to resolve our land disputes. For example last month we had a case of three children who had returned here in Atiak, both parents were killed during the war. Their uncle had sold part of the land and they had nowhere to stay. The community informed the local government, and with the elders they resolved to allocate the children part of the family land"* (CM-A64, interviewed 17/02/10).

The observation by this participant gave an indication that without the intervention of the local government and cultural leaders some of the returnees would be left without any land. At a focus group discussion in Atiak the

participants observed that the majority of land dispute cases were resolved amicably and that there were only three cases in the local tribunal.

The success of ADR in both Gulu and Atiak was mainly attributed to the fact that it promoted relationship building as opposed to the court system that was retributive and adversarial. The ADR approach reduced differences between the parties in conflict and invested in creating inter-family and inter-clan harmony for the sake of peace in the community. The approach was mainly integrative, meaning it focused on relationship building while relying on both cultural and legal values. This restorative component paved the way for other community peacebuilding activities such as integration of formerly abducted persons, reconciliation and psychosocial support.

In highlighting the lessons learned from ADR processes, six out of nine NGOs involved in ADR reported that they had initially taken upon themselves the responsibility of mediating the conflicts rather than *mediating the process* of land dispute resolution. They later opted to work closely with the sub-county land committee and Local Council (LC) 1, 2 and 3.[60] They trained paralegals, community leaders, government officials and cultural leaders. They also formed and trained peace committees in land dispute resolution.

[60] I have explained the structures of local councils in Chapter Four.

The ADR approach to land dispute resolution had a number of limitations that curtailed the maximization of the expected results. There were no official means of enforcement of the decision other than mutual consensus. Hence, dissatisfaction with the ADR ruling, as one local NGO programme officer noted, meant that the parties could resort to court, further heightening tensions between the families and clans (LNGO-PO005, interviewed 14/02/10). The involvement of the community in ADR however put moral pressure on the parties to adhere to the decisions reached. Failure to adhere to the ruling could result in negative repercussions on other social transactions such negotiations for marriage or sale of property. Thus, the ADR verdict was seen by most community participants, both in Gulu and Atiak, as strongly binding.

Another limitation was the fact that the institutional leaders, as third party mediators, were not necessarily neutral (LNGO-PO32, interviewed 25/01/10). Interviews showed that there were cases where cultural leaders had sometimes been biased in their ruling, favouring particular clans or families against the other. One elder from Gulu observed:

> *"The boundary of my land has always been clear. Unfortunately the tree demarcations we had here 15 years ago are no longer there. But everyone knows where they were, yet the mediating elders decided to push the boundary against my side. They obviously favoured the Payeera clan because most of these elders belong to that clan"* (CM - G71, interviewed 2/02/10).

Another participant from Gulu observed that "I am still torn between going to court and accepting the mediation by the elders. I don't trust two of the elders in the committee, they could make a biased decision. So I may end up going to court" (CM-G69, interviewed 10/03/10). There were also reported cases of

corrupt cultural and government leaders who took bribes in favour of one individual against the other.

Part II: Human Rights Advocacy

Human rights advocacy emerged as an important component of peacebuilding both in Gulu. In Atiak the community did not have the resources to conduct human rights advocacy except in very limited and localized manner. Most NGO participants (19 out of 27) observed that human rights advocacy was at its peak during the conflict. This was mainly due to high levels of violent activities by the LRA and the increasing numbers of casualties among the populations. NGOs carried out human rights advocacy at the grassroots level as well as at tracks two (middle range leadership within the government and inter-governmental NGOs) and track one (top government officials, influential organizations nationally and internationally). These processes were based on collaboration between the NGOs, government organs and community.

However, in Atiak region where there were no NGOs, the residents liaised with their cultural and local council leaders to conduct human rights advocacy. The community also worked with the association of parents to lobby the local government to consider creating employment for the youth. In the focus group discussions in Atiak there was a general concern that the region of Atiak had been neglected for many years and that the community needed to upscale its advocacy efforts on the government in order to bring development to the region (FG-A008, interviewed 14/03/10). However, advocacy activities were not as widespread as in Gulu. This was because in Gulu NGOs used their resources to

increase the number of advocacy activities. NGOs also had international networks to put pressure on the government and LRA to stop military abuse and consider peace negotiation. Another factor was that Gulu had a higher population level in both urban and rural areas, as a result there were many advocacy needs.

The main strategies applied by the NGOs in human rights advocacy included naming and shaming, public protests, mass education, local and international mobilization. Advocacy for human rights exposed the level of abuse by both the LRA and Uganda government. A programme officer from a local NGO stated that the government had gained political mileage by claiming that it was fighting a 'terrorist' group that had committed atrocious acts against an innocent population (LNGO-PC31, interviewed 18/01/10). He added that paradoxically the same government was oblivious to its own human rights abuses and instead opted to advance a discourse on protection and defence of the innocent.

One of the programme officers from a local human rights NGO observed that when her organization was founded in 1996 there were many cases of human rights abuse by both the LRA and Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) (LNGO-PO33, interviewed 22/03/10). Everyone was afraid to speak out. The government forces carried out all kinds of abuses with impunity. The informant added that as an organization they felt they had an obligation to speak out in order to stop the inhumane treatment of the Acholi people. In collaboration with other organizations they spoke out strongly against these abuses and after some time the government began to listen.

A programme officer from a local human rights NGO observed that her organization gathered evidence of abuse by the government and LRA (LNGO-PO33, interviewed 22/03/10). The organization made their findings public and used them for advocacy against human rights abuses. At the same time the local community perceived the government discourse on human security as false and manipulative. A 52 year old woman from the control population of Atiak said that the abducted children were sandwiched between the LRA and government fire, and that the population was constantly under attack (CM-A57, interviewed 26/02/10). She retorted that:

> *"For many years we suffered from constant attacks. When the government forces came they would tell us that we are harbouring and feeding the LRA, and when the LRA attacked they would accuse us of betraying their cause. The LRA claimed that our community was disclosing their hideouts and operations to the government. They would also attack us because some of our sons had defected from their forces"* (CM-A57, interviewed 26/02/10).

In a reaction to the way in which the government observed double standards during the conflict, a programme officer of a local NGO in Gulu asserted that, "when the government killed the abducted child soldiers in combat they would say that they have killed rebels, but when they rescued them they would say that they have rescued formerly abducted children" (LNGO-PO31, interviewed 18/01/10).

Most NGOs conducted grassroots advocacy although there was no evidence of organized sophisticated networks as there were during the conflict period. One of the NGO informants explained that there is a sense of fulfilment amongst the NGOs based on the impression that advocacy contributed to the end of conflict

and subsequent relative peace. Grassroots advocacy, though limited in its expansiveness, had mainly focused on raising awareness on the need for a more participative approach to social change, such as the use of alternative dispute resolution to solve land conflict; participation in reconciliation rituals as a means of bringing the community together to work towards a different future; and encouraging people to till their land in order to increase the food basket and minimize reliance on humanitarian aid. To achieve these objectives NGOs worked with peace committees, paralegals, cultural and local government leaders, religious leaders and other influential individuals within the community. The interviews in both Gulu and Atiak demonstrated that conflict impact mitigation activities could not be fully effective if there was not collaborative grassroots mobilization. There were thus concerted efforts to drum up support for the change of attitudes and perceptions amongst the population in order to bring about a more peaceful society.

One of the major concerns for some NGOs in Gulu and peace agents in Atiak was the abuse of alcohol among men. The high unemployment rates coupled with the dependency culture acquired during the period of humanitarian assistance were among the primary causes of these tendencies. Campaigns against alcohol abuse did not seem to have borne much success. The frustrations of the delay of the peace dividend, the high levels of expectations on government assistance and the pressure of providing basic needs became serious challenges to grassroots advocacy.

A culture of violence and impunity had developed during the period of conflict, making human rights advocacy a risky endeavour. One of the human rights advocates working for an international organization as programme coordinator observed that she was once threatened by a military man following a broadcast by her organization against human rights abuses by the UPDF (INGO-PC48, interviewed 19/03/10). She got a phone call from someone who claimed to be from the military. The person said: "if you don't stop talking on the radio against us you will see. In fact, I want to see you tomorrow at the military barracks; you have to come and see me and sort this out otherwise I will deal with you." She defied these threats and affirmed that she would not stop talking against human rights abuses. Similar threats were issued to her colleagues in other organizations but they did not stop speaking against the injustices. A renowned religious leader, Archbishop Odama, head of Acholi Religious Leaders for Peace Initiative (ARLPI), asserted that he was equally threatened by different individuals for making contacts with the rebels (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10). He claimed that some people felt that through his mediation efforts in the LRA-GOU conflict, he was giving unnecessary importance to the LRA who had already inflicted so much suffering on the population. He however refused to be intimidated by such threats and continued his work for peace. There were no cases of threats reported in Atiak. I attributed this to the fact that there was a close collaboration between the government and cultural leaders, and that the two groups preferred a consultative, rather than a confrontational approach.

In Gulu, the use of privately owned media became an effective strategy of deconstructing the state power by naming and shaming the perpetrators of

violence. Two factors contributed to this strategy: first was that the government media would not expose the cases of human rights abuse by its own forces, the UPDF. On the contrary, the private media within and outside Uganda were willing to publicize human rights abuses. Second was that the use of media exposed to the rest of the world the fact that the northern Uganda population was a victim of both the LRA and government of Uganda. This put pressure on the government to improve its human rights record and augment its efforts for peace.

Human rights campaigns created a social consciousness which generated an internal force among NGOs to exert pressure on the government and LRA, hence calling for an end to impunity. The findings show that human rights campaigns raised awareness on the rights and responsibilities of individuals, government institutions and community. For example, a human rights activist affirmed that:

> *"While initially the military were against our work and even threatened to stop us, later on they realized that we did not discriminate whose rights we were defending. Interestingly, after several years of our work, officers in the army came to us to report cases of abuse by their senior officials"* (LNGO-PO33, interviewed 22/03/10).

Through the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the government investigated human rights abuses by the government forces. A government official from the Commission asserted that:

> *"We carry out investigations of abuses by government agents to ensure that they observe the work ethics of respect of human dignity; we educate government forces and the public on human rights and responsibilities as means of establishing good relationship between the two (government and public); we also do an audit of reported cases of human rights abuses and*

document them in an annual human rights report" (UG-PO007, interviewed 18/02/10).

Four other NGOs affirmed that they now had a good working relationship with the government armed forces following extensive training on human rights observance and how to handle the public with respect.

The congested conditions within the IDP camps had rendered women vulnerable to abuse by men. Some of the women who had resettled back to their villages continued to face similar kinds of violence as those experienced in the IDP camps. Early pregnancies which were rampant in the camps became a matter of concern among the returnees since some girls had become pregnant after their return to the villages. In response to this challenge two NGOs became active in lobbying against women abuse. In Atiak the association of parents focused their activities on speaking against the tendency of the youth to prey on girls, and in some cases make them pregnant. The women worked closely with the local government authorities in protecting the girls against these kinds of abuses.

In an interview with the director of an NGO running a support programme for girl-mothers, it emerged that the level of violence against women was undocumented (LNGO-PC73, interviewed 14/02/10). The director observed that more than half the number of girl-mothers became pregnant from violent abuse. I could not, however, verify these estimations. This informant underscored that besides learning professional skills that empowered them to earn a living, the girls received psycho-social support to build their self-esteem. The respondent was also emphatic that girls, and women in general, were much more

vulnerable to abuses during and after the war, hence her priority to the girl-mothers.

Five out of nine community participants in Gulu raised concern over the general assumption that young women were more vulnerable than young men. They argued that the young men, especially the formerly abducted, were in need of as much support as the young women. However, a programme coordinator of a local NGO taking care of young women refuted such claims (LNGO-PC73, 14/02/10). She was emphatic that under normal and peaceful circumstances women were already culturally and socially marginalized within the Acholi community. They had no right to inherit land or property of their husbands; they did not have the freedom to choose who to get married to; those who happened to fall pregnant before marriage could end up never getting married. She underscored that the war situation had further disadvantaged women and her choice to only help young women was a deliberate one. This was because these women had undergone traumatic experiences while under captivity by the rebels, and at the same time faced rejection in the villages. The respondent emphasized that her aim was to empower the girl-mothers with basic skills that could make them economically independent and regain their respect in the community.

The above analysis shows that understanding how gender perceptions and socializations impacted conflict trends was important in the designing of peacebuilding programmes. The continuation of women violence, from the camps to the villages, indicated that certain abuses had been tolerated despite their adverse effects on the individuals concerned.

The majority of the NGOs adapted the practice of mainstreaming gender into their peacebuilding activities as an attempt to attain sustainable realization of the peace dividend. While some NGO participants reported that mainstreaming was mainly attributed to the contextual imperatives, others related it to funding conditionalities imposed by the donors.[61]

The local community in both Gulu and Atiak was active in advocating against human rights abuses even though they did not have similar resources and networks as the NGOs. I have already highlighted above how the community in Atiak liaised with the local leadership in lobbying against human rights abuse cases. In Gulu, the Acholi Religious Leaders for Peace Initiative (ARLPI) was founded as a local initiative before NGOs came to the scene of peacebuilding. According to Archbishop Odama, one of the co-founders of ARLPI, the religious leaders had for a long time committed themselves to speaking out against human rights abuse by both the LRA and GOU (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10). Both the community and NGO narratives against human rights abuse deconstructed the government monopoly of power and knowledge, and sought to decipher the complexities behind the conflict.

[61] The principle of gender mainstreaming is developed from feminist theory but refers to both men and women. This principle "recognizes that gender relations are an essential aspect of any (conflict) situation, and that conflict, particularly violent conflict, changes gender relations in profound ways" SANDOLE-STAROSTE, I. 2009. Gender mainstreaming: A valuable tool in building sustainable peace. *In:* SANDOLE, D. J. D., BYRNE, S., SANDOLE-STAROSTE, I. & SENEHI, J. (eds.) *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution.* London: Routeledge.

Part III: Reconciliation and Transitional Justice

In this section I will discuss the findings on reconciliation and transitional justice and demonstrate how the NGOs, local government and community worked together in promoting healing and reconciliation. This reflects the joint enterprise approach in relational constructionism, particularly in reference to how different transitional justice discourses developed through interactions, confrontations, advocacy and community exploration of the possible ways out of the complex challenges.

One of the main tasks for NGOs and local community was to put in place mechanisms for mediating conflicts, promoting reconciliation and devising the best approaches to transitional justice. These interventions aimed at increasing people's capacity to participate and own the structural and cultural transformation processes. The structural transformation referred to changes in policies and mechanisms of justice in order to facilitate post-conflict recovery through execution of justice, healing, reconciliation and social-economic empowerment. Cultural transformation referred to the resort to cultural resources that were fundamental to the enhancement of conflict resolution mechanisms, strengthening of local agency and development of a critical mass that could exponentially multiply the peacebuilding initiatives in the community.

I did not notice major differences between Atiak and Gulu in the way in which the community and NGOs addressed the challenges of reconciliation and transitional justice. For both locations reintegration of the formerly abducted; mediation between families and clans; and exploration of culturally-based approaches to reconciliation stood out as primary concerns. The difference was

in the scale and capacity: whereas the NGOs had the capacity to internationally lobby against the ICC's retributive approach, the Atiak community relied on lobbying the local government officials to raise their concerns. However, one of the community participants in Atiak observed that the community used the local church network to raise awareness over issues of concern (CM-A66, interviewed 5/5/10). He added that occasionally, through liaison with religious leaders in ARLPI, they were able to channel their concerns to higher government authorities.

I will now discuss reconciliation and transitional justice challenges from three different perspectives: the ICC debate, cultural approaches to reconciliation and reintegration of the formerly abducted.

The ICC Debate

The extent to which the ICC warrants of arrest contributed to the failure of the signing of the peace agreement between the Government of Uganda and LRA was debatable. There were mixed opinions both in Gulu and Atiak (see the Box 3 below). While some respondents were of the view that the ICC intervention derailed the peace process, others argued that the ICC put pressure on the LRA leaders to take part in the peace process.

Box 3: Participant perceptions on ICC intervention

- "the ICC came at the wrong time and interfered with the peace process" (CM-55, interviewed 09/05/10)
- "it is because of the fear of the arrest by the ICC that the LRA agreed to the peace process" (LNGO-PO53, interviewed 6/05/10)
- "we have our own cultural rituals of reconciliation, so we don't need the ICC interference" (CM-A68, interviewed 17/02/10)
- "it is good that the ICC is here, these criminals in the LRA have to be tried and

imprisoned" (CM-A61, interviewed 14/03/10)

In order to get a broader understanding of the community perceptions on the ICC arrest warrants, I sampled the views of the participants in focus group discussions. The focus groups, as I have indicated above, were composed of a diverse mixture of participants, male and female, young and old. About 40 per cent of the focus group participants were elders between the ages of 60-80 years, and the rest ranged between 18-50 years. In both Gulu and Atiak the consensus opinion in these groups was that the ICC derailed the peace process because of their poor timing. The participants argued that the warrants of arrests cast a cloud of suspicion on the peace negotiation.

In a similar line of thought, a peacebuilding coordinator from an international organization opined that the LRA leadership could not trust any offers of amnesty as incentive to the signing of the peace agreement (INGO-PO43, interviewed 16/02/10). Archbishop Odama noted that the LRA leadership was afraid that the signing of the peace talks would have left them with no option but imprisonment (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10).

A programme officer from a local NGO observed that:

> *"The ICC seems to be an imperial culture that imposes itself on smaller countries. Justice systems should have their foundations on fairness. There are many contentious issues against the ICC, mainly in regard to their approach to justice and how they address the issue of victim-perpetrator. There is need to investigate all cases – giving all an equal opportunity. It is also important to consider prioritization of activities. The ICC came in when the priority was peace. They ignored the demands for peace by the community"* (LNGO-PO45, interviewed 12/04/10).

The view held by the above participant seems to indicate an imposition of 'liberal peace' by the ICC on northern Uganda community. The participant is emphatic that the understanding of justice should not only be based on international regimes of justice within the conceptualization of international law. The local context has to be taken into consideration in order to achieve fair balance between justice, reparation, compensation and sustainable peace.

There was a concern that the ICC had not consulted the local people on the way forward. Archbishop Odama protested that:

> *"The ICC never talked to us before their intervention, they simply issued warrants of arrest – all we heard was the arrest warrants had been issued and that Uganda, the DRC and Sudan should arrest them. When we went with other religious leaders from ARLPI to the ICC at The Hague we told them – 'if the government of Uganda, which wanted to kill Kony could not get him, how will it arrest him? Similarly, the LRA has been in Sudan and Congo for many years - do you expect them to arrest them (LRA) – do you expect these countries to change and all of a sudden take sides?'"* (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10).

This participant insinuated that dialogue with the community would have led to a different strategy in dealing with the issue of the arrest of the LRA leaders. Four religious leaders and twelve NGOs were emphatic that by the time the ICC issued its arrest warrants the urgency for peace was at its peak and the opportunity for dialogue was ripe. Through persuasive engagement by the NGOs, the LRA had been convinced to come to the negotiation table, paving way for the eventual ending of conflict. Thus, persistence by the ICC to issue the arrest warrants before the completion of the peace talks, jeopardized the success of the mediation process.

However, there were participants in support of the ICC intervention because they expected that it would bring justice against the suffering that the community

had endured under the LRA. Four out of nine local participants from Gulu, and two out of six from the control population of Atiak were of the opinion that the ICC intervention put pressure on the LRA to come to the peace negotiations. There were participants who were concerned about the culture of impunity that had permeated the society during the conflict. They therefore called for the arrest and trial of the culprits. In a similar perspective, one participant from a local NGO was emphatic that comprehensive justice demands that the perpetrators of the crimes be held accountable, and victims of these heinous acts resettled and compensated (LNGO-PC73, interviewed 14/02/10).

A local resident in Gulu was emphatic that: “My father was killed by the LRA, my two brothers were killed by the LRA, do you expect me to simply forgive and move on? These people have to pay back for the pain and harm they caused” (CM-G55, interviewed 09/05/10). A participant from Atiak reiterated that the government forces, Uganda People’s Democratic Forces (UPDF), should also be held accountable because of their past atrocities. She said that: “The government forces tortured and killed some of our people for suspicion of supporting the LRA. The suspects should have been arrested, interrogated and tried in court. Both UPDF and LRA have to be tried in court” (CM-A57, interviewed 26/02/10). Sentiments like these were common particularly among those who had lost family members during the conflict period. These expressions of frustration evidenced the perception that no justice had been done to punish the UPDF and former LRA rebels nor had the victims been compensated for the crimes committed against them.

Despite the diverse opinions above, the majority of the participants (34 out of 49) preferred a reconciliatory and compensatory approach to transitional justice. Similar views were shared by religious and community leaders in the informal interviews in Gulu and Atiak.

Cultural Approaches to Forgiveness and Reconciliation

As an alternative to the ICC intervention, there were calls from politicians, religious and cultural leaders for the community to resort to the Acholi reconciliation rituals. My primary interest in investigating reconciliation initiatives was to find out the extent to which NGOs and local communities in both Gulu and Atiak developed new narratives for mutual acceptance and reconstruction of a new future. The complexity of the conflict in northern Uganda, as I have already stated above, lay in the fact that there is no clear distinction between the victim and perpetrator. One of the local NGO participants strongly asserted this point in response to the question about the approach being used for reconciliation with the former combatants:

> *"We are all victims of this war. Whether you have lost a friend, a relative or close family member, even if you have not lost anyone that you know - we are all victims. We have had more than twenty years, not just of war, but of isolation, fear, mourning and hunger. We have no choice but to find a reconcilable way of living together"* (LNGO-PC53, interviewed 06/05/10).

A 52 year old woman from Atiak retorted:

> *"Who do you forgive? Who do you hold accountable, the LRA, the government or the formerly abducted children? In any case the one who did the killings around here is the child of my neighbour, and one of us could have a child who did similar killings elsewhere. If we start revenging on each other, where do you start and where do you end. We have to do a ritual that cleanses all of us from this catastrophe"* (CM-A57, interviewed 26/02/10).

I noticed that it was this complexity of the reality of conflict and the double jeopardy of victim-perpetrator that made the work of forgiveness and reconciliation very difficult in both Gulu and Atiak.

One of the reconciliation rituals was *mato oput* which I have described in Chapter Four. The majority of the participants acknowledged that they had never witnessed *mato oput*. In a focus group discussions in Gulu (FG-G0018, interviewed 23/02/10), out of eight participants there were four elders aged between 60-80 years who, to my surprise, admitted that *mato oput* was a rare practice. Only one of them had actually witnessed it. In the focus group in Atiak only two elders confirmed that they had witnessed a *mato oput* ritual (FG-A008, interviewed 4/03/10). I learned from these discussions that *mato oput* was much more talked about than practiced. NGOs had attempted to institutionalize and expand the use of rituals but this approach did not find a strong grounding in the community.

There were participants who held the opinion that the *mato oput* was a creation of the NGOs. However, Dr. Okumu, an Acholi anthropologist, strongly opposed the assertion that *mato oput* was a creation of the NGOs. He underscored that:

> *"Already way back in 1930s when the missionaries were taking ethnological notes here, and writing dictionaries, we find mato oput as a common ritual of reconciliation. It is not a new invention, what is happening is that we are bringing it back to reconcile our people, but there are those, like NGOs, who are not doing it as it should be done"* (CM-G28, interviewed 03/03/10).

Most participants (7 out of 9) from the community in Gulu agreed that *mato oput* was re-introduced by the community and not by the NGOs. Similar views were

shared by people I had talked to in informal interviews. In Atiak participants affirmed that the community resorted to the re-introduction of the past rituals of reconciliation in order to respond to the challenge of reconciling families and clans. In Gulu, NGOs joined the community in the use of the rituals of reconciliation as a means of resolving conflict. However, these initiatives were still at early stages and limited in practice.

Archbishop Odama, in explaining the central value of reconciliation rites amongst different ethnic communities in northern Uganda, asserted that it was important to re-introduce the cultural values that united people and facilitated the spaces for dialogue (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10). He identified reconciliation as a common value in most ethnic groups in northern Uganda and underscored that it had the capacity to bridge differences and bring people into dialogue:

> *"We have looked at the different tribes here, for example Alur, Acholi, Lughbara, Jonam, and we discovered that in all these groups they have reconciliation rites, even though they may call them by different names and their approaches vary. Basically they all have reconciliation rights which bring parties that had been in conflict to a mediation process and reconciliation. Some of them have done reconciliation rites in the past; it's now a matter of making them known to the people. For example, the Mahdi and Lugbara had a reconciliation ceremony with the people of Acholi in a place known as Palar in 1983. This year during our national peace week celebrations in Arua, the cultural leader of Lughbara said: 'What went on between us in the past (that is the recurrent conflicts between Lughbara, Acholi and Mahdi), we resolved it right here where we are today. On that day we experienced peace and reconciliation and we bent spears as a gesture of an end to war, and today the bent spears are still here as you can see them'"* (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10).

The binding nature of rituals such as the *bending of spears* described above denotes transcendence from debilitating experiences of conflict to renewal of relationships. In other words, reconciliation provided a new opportunity for the community to have a new beginning and re-construct a different reality.

The participant interviews revealed four main characteristics of the Acholi rituals of reconciliation emerged: the rituals were *communal*; they aimed at *reconciling with the spirit* of the dead; they were *restorative,* and they sought *union with the god of the clan*. The restoration of *communal* harmony was fundamental in every reconciliation process. An offense committed by an individual is owned up by the whole clan and an emerging conflict is communally addressed. This also implies that compensation is paid for by the perpetrator's clan.

Reconciliation with the spirits was one the most important aspects of reconciliation. Even though I was familiar with the concept of reconciliation with the dead, I did not realize the depth of such a ritual until I interviewed the participants in Gulu and Atiak. Both population samples reiterated the union between the living and the dead. One participant from a local NGO observed that: "the dead are never dead. Their spirits are with us, and we have to reconcile with them too" (LNGO-PO53, interviewed 6/05/10). Hence, every act of reconciliation is meant to harmonize the entire community, both the living and the dead.

A local government leader from Gulu observed that there were families in the IDP camps that were hesitant in returning to their villages because the bones of the dead (those killed during the war) had never been properly buried. The spirits of the dead, according to one of the informants in Gulu, were angry and could be heard wailing at night (CM-G30, interviewed 11/02/10). In further interrogations through informal interviews, two community participants from Gulu asserted that the spirits wanted a decent burial. In order to calm the spirits,

specific Acholi rituals of collecting the bones of the abandoned dead, and re-burying them had to be performed. These rituals were meant to cleanse the villages from any misfortunes.

I sought to understand the significance of the fear of the spirits of the dead. As I have already stated in Chapter Four, a bad spirit was referred to in Acholi as *cen.* There was a constant reference to this term. In my Luo language we refer to the bad spirit as *chien* and, like the Acholi, we believe in having a good relationship with the spirits of the dead. This perspective broadened my understanding of the implication of the role of spirits in peacebuilding.

The elders from the focus group in Gulu emphasized the fact that the spirits of the dead were always present in their lives (FG-G0018, interviewed 23/02/10). There were 'medicine men' who had spiritual powers to communicate with the spirits of the dead. These were referred to as *ajuoga*.[62] According to a community participant in Atiak, an *ajuoga* is consulted when the community or a family is facing calamities such as unexplained deaths (CM-A61, interviewed 14/03/11). The *ajuoga* had warned that unless the community organized a decent burial for the dead there would not be peace. The conversations in the focus groups in both Atiak and Gulu demonstrated that communication with the spirits of the dead was an experience of transcendence.

In the Acholi society, similar to many other African societies, communion with the dead is very strong and often projects mythical mysticism aimed at restoring

[62] In my Kenyan Luo we use the same term. The term 'medicine men' does not quite capture the meaning of *ajuoga.* An *ajuoga* does more than administering traditional medicine since he also communicates with the spirits of the dead.

harmony within the community. Faure (2000:155) posits that: "By definition, the myth has a structuring function and can lead to position the global approach in a specific context that would be difficult to put into question by rational means." In my interviews with the community informants I learned that the 'mystery' behind a myth is such that, as an outsider to the cultural context, it is difficult to comprehend it, and as an insider it is not easy to give a logical and satisfactory explanation of the meaning it carries. For the Acholi community the mythical mysticism behind reconciliation with the dead offered a significant meaning for recovery from conflict and enhancement of communal harmony. Hence, these myths and beliefs about the dead mediated human experiences in search for full harmony with the dead and between community members.

The *restorative* nature of reconciliation lay in the fact that the primary focus of reconciliation rituals was to rebuild relationships within the community through forgiveness. This implied building relationships between the offender and the victim, at both individual and family levels, as well as at clan and ethnic group levels. The entire process of reconciliation was deeply spiritual. Dr. Okumu, in response to the question about the meaning of reconciliation in the Acholi culture, observed that:

> *"The Acholi justice system presupposes belief. This is very strong in people's conviction. It is a restorative process that is expressed ritually. These processes function to keep the society together. Therefore the restoration of the social structure is part and parcel of the reconciliation ritual"* (CM-G28, interviewed 30/03/10)

This observation indicates that the belief component in the rituals is at a much higher level than the mechanical and detailed reconciliation process. In other words, what is binding is the spiritual belief in the effect that rituals have on

one's life. Thus, violating commitments made during the ritual processes could result in one's death or misfortunes.

Union with the god of the clan was equally important because the Acholi believed that their physical world is connected to the spiritual world of the divine. The recognition of the god of the clan bound the community to observe certain values, such as forgiveness and reconciliation.

Like in the case of reintegration rituals, there were diverse opinions and controversies about the effectiveness and understanding of the reconciliation rituals. For example, there were those who noted that the *mato oput* ritual could only be used in inter-clan conflicts whereas others claimed that it ought to be limited to inter-family conflicts. Dr. Okumu, an Acholi anthropologist in Gulu, questioned the practice of the performance of the rituals by the paramount chief (CM-G28, interviewed 3/03/10). He was insistent that the conceptualization of a paramount chief for the whole of Acholi was a colonial creation and thus, as a result, the authority of such a chief cannot be considered to be valid. He further added that: "The current paramount chief is the anointed chief of the Payeera clan, but he is not the anointed chief of my Poran clan. So whatever rituals he performs would not be valid in my clan" (CM-G28, interviewed 3/03/10). A community member in Gulu observed that rituals of reconciliation with the dead are sacred; ought to be performed in a shrine while following stipulated rubrics; and are binding to the family and clan involved (CM-G69, interviewed 10/03/10).

There were other participants who considered the use of rituals to be against Christian teachings and out of date. A peacebuilding officer from an international NGO elaborated that:

> *"When we started we combined values of reconciliation from two cultures: religious and traditional. There were certain Christian communities that were opposed to the use of traditional rituals. These were mainly Pentecostals. They insisted that these practices went against the Christian teachings. But we didn't get any resistance from Anglicans and Catholics, only the Pentecostals. Both the Anglicans and Catholics believed that the two approaches, religious and traditional, were complementary"* (INGO-PO47, interviewed 11/0210).

This observation showed that the Acholi rituals could not be assumed to be accepted by everyone or practised in the same way among different clans. At the same time, reconciliation rituals were perceived as inadequate in addressing past crimes. A peacebuilding coordinator from an international NGO narrated how one of the clans refused to reconcile with another because the former felt the crime was too grave to be forgiven (INGO-PC46, interviewed 25/02/10). While some informants in Gulu believed that *mato oput* could be used to reconcile communities in conflict, others in the control population of Atiak observed that some incidences of killings like the 1995 Atiak massacre could not be cleansed using the *mato oput*.

A woman from Atiak was emphatic that "we need to address this issue now as a community otherwise the snake will continue to live in the water pot" (CM-A57, interviewed 26/02/10). In a further clarification on her statement it emerged that the reference to a 'snake in the water pot' meant that if the issue of reconciliation was not addressed, it would become too difficult to handle. Once the snake was in the pot the family would not only be denied access to the water, but also faced the risk of breaking the pot in order to get rid of the snake. This was a powerful image that expressed the dilemma in reconciliation since,

as I have already noted above, some of the former combatants were both victims and perpetrators. Community leaders underscored the recourse to dialogue as a means of addressing the dilemma of reconciliation.

From a relational constructionism perspective the dilemma offered an opportunity to explore ideas within a transitional space. The transitional space could be identified as a place for the testing of ideas, exchange of emotions, disagreements and a search for what best responds to the challenge of reconciliation. For example, the depth and authenticity of the reconciliation rituals were questioned by a few informants. Several participants observed that the NGOs had taken a very simplistic approach to undertaking reconciliation rituals. Dr. Okumu reiterated that:

> *"It is blasphemous for the NGOs to ignore the solemnity of the rituals. They do not ensure that the rightly anointed chief of the clan carries out the reconciliation ritual. They do the rituals secretly, there and there, and drive off in their Pajeros, then write reports that they have done the cleansing - and proceed to request for more funds: 'USA send us more money.' This is a mockery of the Acholi rituals"* (CM-G28, interviewed 3/03/10).

I found this to be a harsh critique of the NGOs particularly given that they worked closely with the local community in the administering of the rituals. The critique is however an expression of the frustration at how the performance of the rituals had been institutionalized to the extent that some important components of the rituals were watered down.

I was curious to understand the community perception towards participation in reconciliation rituals. Five out of nine community participants from Gulu noted a lack of interest in the reconciliation rituals by some community members. In the focus group discussion in Atiak the participants observed that when cultural

leaders first re-introduced reconciliation rituals there was enthusiasm within the community and people attended in large number (FG-A008, interviewed 4/03/10). However, that enthusiasm had died out and very few people attended the ceremonies. In both Gulu and Atiak reasons for the lack of enthusiasm in participating in reconciliation rituals included: doubts on the effect of the rituals; lack of an understanding of the rituals; negative perceptions on reconciliation as a means of attaining peace; preference for a legal recourse as a means of dealing with the past crimes. There were also community members in Gulu who felt that NGOs had used a wrong approach to reconciliation with the spirits. For example, in an effort to persuade the villages to reconcile with the spirits of the dead, one NGO decided to compensate the villages for volunteering to collect and bury the bones of the dead. Each person collecting the bones was awarded one sheep. Such a practice incapacitated genuine spontaneity and entrenched a dependency culture that had already been adopted in the IDP camps. However, this did not necessarily discourage the community motivation to participate in peacebuilding activities.

An NGO peace coordinator emphasized that there cannot be genuine reconciliation if the perpetrators do not own up to their offenses (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10). She added that the desperation for peace should not push the community to ignore the genuine process of reconciliation: “people are living in their shadows. There is a sense of desperation for peace. It’s as though, if we say we all forgive each other peace will come just like that. *Mato oput* has to have a deeper meaning than that.”

There were also calls for genuine remorse and compensatory reparations. A peace coordinator from a local NGO retorted:

> "*The reconciliation ritual of mato oput has been misinterpreted. People think mato oput is a matter of saying 'I have forgiven you so let's go on with life'. Mato oput ritual is not enough. People have to come forward and own up their crimes, then ask for forgiveness and pay compensation according to Acholi culture"* (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10).

This participant was emphatic that reconciliation has to be genuinely undertaken by both the victim and perpetrator. The emphasis on establishing facts and knowing the truth about the crimes committed was generally expressed by many participants. The willingness to forgive and reconcile, on the part of the victims, was juxtaposed with the willingness, on the part of the perpetrators and their clans, to tell the truth, express remorse and commit themselves to reparation.

While these criticisms could be valid, there was a general appreciation that rituals, if well conducted, offered a great opportunity for communal reconciliation. The interviews equally acknowledge the need to strengthen and train institutional leaders in understanding the deeper meaning of the rituals and how to increase their potential for peace and reconciliation. The debate about reconciliation rituals provided transitional space for dialogue in envisioning a different future.

Reintegration of formerly abducted persons and Ex-Combatants

Respondents from three NGOs running reintegration programmes perceived the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) to be informal and lacking in proper structures for implementation. The DDR operated under the broader government programme of Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for

northern Uganda. The NGOs placed their priority on reintegrating the ex-combatants because of the latter's vulnerability levels from the consequences of war. One of the NGO peace coordinators informed me that his organization received thousands of formerly abducted persons and ex-combatants (LNGO-PC50, interviewed 12/03/2010). They offered them psycho-social support such as counselling and skill training that gave them an opportunity to get employment.

Reintegration in Atiak was mainly conducted by the local government and cultural leaders, as well as the parents' association. Initiatives taken by the youth were aimed at taking girls back to school in order to avoid early marriages. The leaders and parents' association arranged for the reintegration of formerly abducted persons by raising awareness in the community of the importance of accepting back the formerly abducted. Reintegration was however hampered by the fact that Atiak did not have an elaborate network of receiving and reintegrating the formerly abducted and former combatants, as was the case in Gulu where NGOs had put in a lot of resources. The local government officials arranged for reception centres where formerly abducted and former combatants could first report but these were not frequently used. Another major challenge in Atiak was that there were low levels of employment opportunities in comparison to Gulu. Hence, most returnees were unemployed and demoralized.

Two NGOs (one local and the other international) carried out family tracing exercise in order to identify family members of the former combatants. The NGOs prepared the respective families to receive and integrate into the community the ex-combatants, formerly abducted persons and other returnees.

Asked to what extent the community was prepared to receive and integrate the ex-combatants and formerly abducted persons, participants from the two NGOs observed that, generally there was a good reception but in some cases it was difficult. In both Gulu and Atiak formerly abducted women who came back with babies were often not well received. Their children were perceived by some community members as a reminiscence of the atrocities of war infringed on the society by the LRA. Others believed that these children belonged to the 'bad' blood of the rebels and would bring a curse to the community.

One of the programme coordinators of a local NGO running a project for young mothers, mostly formerly abducted, described their traumatic experiences:

> *"These young women already have enormous trauma from the abuse in captivity. They were abducted when they were still very young, some as young as 11 years old. They were used as sex slaves and had children with different men, some of them are infected with HIV virus and so are their children. Besides they face rejection in their communities"* (LNGO-PC73, interviewed 14/02/10).

I came across such observations in Gulu among four local community participants and three NGO respondents. Similar perceptions were expressed in Atiak. Hence, there were concerted campaigns by NGOs and community leaders to conscientize the communities to accept the 'girl-mothers' (a term the programme coordinator above used to describe mothers below 18 years), and their children. Six out of nine local participants from Gulu concurred that, due to community and NGO efforts, there were improvements in the manner in which the community received the formerly abducted persons. However, in Atiak the community did not have the resources to rescue the 'girl-mothers' and they were left exposed to abuse and rejection by the community, which regularly took place.

The trauma levels, according to a programme coordinator of a local NGO (LNGO-PC50, interviewed 12/03/10), were high particularly among boys who had been involved in direct combat or killings of the villagers. A 63 year old man from Gulu (CM-G65, interviewed 18/02/10) pointed out that his son had disappeared and the family did not know whether he was alive or dead. The village had known several abductions and massacres. The man affirmed that often the LRA forced the newly abducted persons to attack the villages and kill their own relatives and neighbours, as a way of binding the abductees to the rebel group. Similar views were expressed in Atiak by participants in the focus group discussion who observed that some of the formerly abducted persons never came back; and that there were tensions between families who had their children in the UPDF and those who had them in the LRA. These tensions led to accusations and counter accusations that made reconciliation efforts very difficult; and the trauma levels were still high given a series of attacks and massacres that the community had endured over the years (FG-A008, interviewed 4/03/10).

In both Gulu and Atiak, there were attempts to use cultural rituals of reconciliation to integrate the formerly abducted persons and former combatants. The use of rituals for reintegration was mainly applied as a means of culturally transcending the victim-perpetrator differences, reconciling with the past and facilitating communal ownership of the reintegration of ex-combatants. One of the common rituals for reintegration was the practice of *Nyono Tong Gweno*,[63]

[63] I have explained this ritual in Chapter Four.

which in Acholi literally means 'stepping on an egg'. This ritual was used to welcome, cleanse and forgive those who had returned. The assumption was that the person could have committed some crime or simply been away for too long that he or she needed to be purified and return to the community. The ritual is believed to send away the bad spirits known as *cen* in Acholi.

Dr. Okumu, an Acholi anthropologist affirmed that:

> *"The egg represents the innocence, which means the one stepping on it is cleansed to reclaim his or her innocence back to the community. When the Acholi people speak of innocence it means that normally we don't defend ourselves in courts with strong arguments. If an accusation is brought against me and I know that I haven't done anything wrong, I would simply say I did not do it, and if the accuser insists that I did it, I will remain silent without defending myself – I remain silent because my innocence means that I have no mouth, I can't speak. Similarly an egg has no mouth – it expresses innocence"* (CM-G28, interviewed 3/03/10).

A peace coordinator of an international NGO narrated how, in collaboration with the community leadership and the local government, they organized a grand ceremony of welcoming former LRA combatants, as well as the formerly abducted:

> *"With the local chiefs and paralegals we normally help returnees in the reception centres. We organize cleansing ceremonies before we hand them over to the parents. This ceremony is carried out by the traditional chiefs and elders. One day in Amuru District we had 800 people to be reintegrated into the community. We asked them to step on an egg, there was only one egg[64] to step on for 800 hundred people – it was however a symbolic gesture because the egg finally disappeared and the rest of the people simply stepped on the original spot where the egg had been placed. They were all asked by the elders to beg for forgiveness from the community and in turn, the community was also asked by the religious and political leaders to forgive them. We then ate together and celebrated"* (INGO-PC48, 19/03/10).

The gesture of 800 people symbolically stepping on an egg demonstrates the poverty in the community and desperation for creative approaches to

[64] The NGO participant explained to me that her organization could not afford to do the full ritual of providing 800 eggs. They instead opted for a symbolic gesture of placing an egg for everyone to step on.

reintegration of formerly abducted persons. The above participant reiterated that the gesture was meant to raise awareness in the community on the need for reconciliation through acceptance of the formerly abducted and former combatants. Five community participants from Gulu were critical of this approach. They observed that institutionalization of reconciliation rituals by the government and NGOs had limited the extent to which its cultural foundations and values could be realized. One of them was emphatic that the mass stepping of an egg like the one above did not fully capture the rubrics of the reconciliation ritual (CM-G51, interviewed 10/03/10). My analysis is that this process of reintegration was limited by how much it could achieve in terms of reconciliation, particularly given its institutionalized nature and the overwhelming numbers of returnees.

In the focus group discussions in Gulu it was generally acknowledged that both the community and NGOs could not cope with the large number of returnees (FG-G0018, interviewed 23/02/10). In Atiak four out of six community members noted that the community could no longer cope with the pressure of reintegrating the returnees. The participants at the focus group discussion in Gulu asserted that since the return of peace in 2006 many people have come from the LRA captivity, others have left the IDP camps and many more have returned from the diasporas. The psychosocial cases were many and the NGOs and community did not have adequate skills to respond. Thus, the needs were overwhelming. The interviews showed that there was need to re-conceptualize reintegration, post-conflict reconstruction and DDR from multidimensional perspectives.

In Atiak, the action of stepping on an egg and claiming one's innocence was explained by two out of six community participants as fundamental to giving a deeper meaning to the cleansing ceremony. Four other participants in Atiak were of the opinion that such reconciliation rituals can only be undertaken when the community has been instructed about the significance of the rituals; the meaning of each gesture; and the responsibility of the community after the rituals.

A community participant from Gulu was emphatic that the *stepping of an egg* ceremony should normally be carried out at home with the family and clan members and not in public (CM-G67, interviewed 13/03/10). He accused the NGOs and government officials of watering down such an important ritual. However, there was a general expression of urgency among both the local government and NGOs. They were faced with the challenge of reintegrating the returnees through reconciliation rituals, which facilitated a space for interaction, acceptance and forgiveness. A director of one the NGOs admitted that rituals were simply symbolic and that the community had a bigger role to play in reintegrating the returnees (INGO-PC35, interviewed 10/04/10).

As a means of reintegrating the youth into the community, the practice of *Wang O* was also re-introduced. This was an old practice whereby elders sat with the youth around the fire to teach them various customs and moral values. One of the NGO programme officers affirmed that her organization introduced *Wang O*

into a village in the northern side of Gulu, and that initially there were enthusiastic responses (INGO-PO34, interviewed 10/02/10). However, the community could not continue with the practice because the elders claimed they did not have time to carry it on. On further investigation the participant confirmed that there was lack of motivation amongst the elders, and the young people did not seem interested to maintain *Wang O* as a regular practice.

In responding to the question about the challenges of reintegration, a community participant volunteering with a local NGO from Gulu (CM-G63, interviewed 16/02/10) observed that a number of times she had been confronted by the villagers to reconsider the conditions for assisting ex-combatants or formerly abducted. She said:

> *"Several times I have been told that 'some of these people killed yet you are giving them assistance…what about us who suffered in their hands?' Do you realize that you are dividing this community further by helping people who do not deserve to be helped?' I ignored such comments because people who say such things do not understand how traumatized these formerly abducted persons are, and how much they need help in order to integrate into a normal life in our community"* (LNGO-PC73, interviewed 14/02//10)

The challenge that the above participant faced was shared by several others. There was a general feeling within the community in Gulu that the formerly abducted persons were being given undeserved attention despite the fact that some of them had been involved in heinous crimes. The community suggested that resources should be channelled towards assisting families to resettle, create jobs for the youth and offer financial support for income generating activities.

To accelerate the reintegration programme of the former combatants and formerly abducted persons the government offered amnesty under the Amnesty Act 2000.[65] This led to the surrender of some of the former LRA rebels. There were mixed reactions, both in Gulu and Atiak, about reintegrating the former rebels under the Amnesty Act. There were those who felt that some form of punishment or community service should have been imposed on the former combatants whereas others called for understanding and reconciliation. Some members of the community felt that as victims they were never consulted before the Amnesty Law was put in place. There were also those who appreciated the fact that since most ex-combatants had been abducted they should be forgiven and allowed back into the community. Others argued that in order to heal the wounds of the community the ex-combatants should be made to go through the rituals, while some were of the opinion that they should be imprisoned.

It is important to note that NGOs and religious leaders were at the forefront of pushing the government to introduce the Amnesty Act. Archbishop Odama asserted that when his organization (ARLPI) and other NGOs first proposed to the government to offer amnesty in order to encourage the LRA rebels to stop fighting, the government found the idea repugnant (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10). However, further lobbying eventually put pressure on the government to pass the Amnesty Act. This allowed for the formation of Amnesty Commission charged with the reintegration of ex-combatants, who are officially referred to as 'reporters' in the Amnesty Act.

[65] I have discussed the Amnesty Act in Chapter Four.

In order to enforce the Amnesty Act, Demobilization and Resettlement Teams (DRTs) were formed to operate in different northern districts including Gulu, Arua and Kitgum but also in Kampala and Kasese. In an interview with one of the government officials working in the Amnesty Commission, she affirmed that:

> *"The Commission provides certificates for those who are given amnesty. The condition is that they must be Ugandan citizen and an adult, must have returned before the year 2000, and confirmed to be genuine reporter. We have a reintegration programme whereby we provide them with utensils, beddings, farming tools and about Uganda shillings 263,000. We carry out follow up activities such as ensuring that the community is prepared to receive them, financing social economic activities; taking them to school. So far 28,800 combatants have received amnesty"* (UG-P041, interviewed 12/03/10).

The certificate protected the returnees from any kinds of prosecution over the acts that they might have committed in the past. This was a good incentive in encouraging the former combatants (reporters) to take the amnesty opportunity.

The Amnesty Commission integrated the cleansing ceremony of *nyono tong gueno* as a way of reintegrating back to the community those who had been offered amnesty. One of the government officials from the Amnesty Commission described the cleansing and reintegration process as follows:

> *"The communities take 16 reporters per sub-county for cleansing. After the cleansing, psychosocial support programmes follow, mainly counselling and trauma healing. There are community focal points for persons affected, for example child protection units in the community" (UG-PO41, interviewed 12/03/10).*

The government also had its own 'community volunteer care givers' that monitored reintegration activities. Reintegration based on government assistance offered many a chance to begin a new life. For example, the little assistance offered by the Amnesty Commission was well appreciated by the beneficiaries. However, the Commission did not have sufficient funds to assist

everyone, while at the same time due to high poverty levels some adults falsely presented themselves for amnesty in order to access the assistance package.

The DDR programmes were faced with a number of obstacles. There were no reliable records of the actual number of returnees, particularly the former combatants. A government official from the Amnesty Commission observed that "Some ex-combatants are still afraid that they might be arrested whereas others do not have the correct information of what amnesty is about. This is why they don't come here to report" (UG-PO41, interviewed 12/03/10). Most programmes were poorly funded considering the number of requests for assistance. In addition, the post-conflict setting posed the challenge of high levels of poverty, and any assistance offered was seen within the echelons of competing social needs. A peace analyst from a government peace education institution observed that lack of provision of basic employment made former combatants susceptible to recruitment by other armed forces within the region (UG-PO54, interviewed 15/05/10).

Balancing between mechanisms of reintegrating former combatants and taking into account the basic needs of the community, was a difficult task both in Gulu and Atiak. At the same time the moral dilemma of victim-perpetrator that characterized most former LRA combatants meant that the Amnesty Act was an attempt to prioritize harmonious co-existence over retributive application of the law. From the cultural point of view such a process would not be complete if it did not include the cleansing ritual that ensured that the past acts of atrocities were done away with, both for the perpetrator and community.

Peace Education and Reintegration of the Youth

One of the major concerns for both NGOs and community peace agents was the fact that the majority of the children below 21years had been born in the IDP camps; had experienced LRA attacks; and in some cases had been abducted and subjected to violent acts. They therefore needed a secure space to express themselves and heal as they interactively learned a new culture of peace based on dialogue, tolerance, understanding and mutual respect. NGOs relied mostly on peace education programmes to reach out to the youth and engage them in discussions about community integration and participation in peacebuilding. In Atiak the schools used the government curriculum on peace education.

The institution of a culture of peace through peace education emerged as one of the main reintegration activities in NGO peacebuilding. Peace education was undertaken by four international and two local NGOs, mainly targeting the youth in schools. Peace education was generally viewed by NGOs as a learning process aimed at helping the youth reintegrate into the community by acquiring a culture of peace. An assistant headmaster of a primary school in Atiak asserted that peace education was considered to be an integral part of student formation (CM-A66, interviewed5/05/10). Students were encouraged to perform community services such as cleaning the streets, helping the old repair their houses and encouraging other youths to adapt a peace culture. A programme officer of an international NGO in Gulu said that: “We use peace education to change the violent attitudes of some of our students. We encourage them to talk about their differences” (INGO-PO52, interviewed 7/05/10). Two NGOs viewed

peace education as part of the school curriculum that should be taught like any other subject.

All NGOs engaged in peace education affirmed that conducting peace education in schools after 22 years of conflict was a difficult challenge. As one peacebuilding coordinator of a local NGO elaborated "children born in these areas have never known peace...we try to educate them to be peace builders by inculcating in them the idea of peace and how they can be peace builders" (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10).

In Gulu, NGOs initiated peace clubs, sports competition, cultural music, dance and drama as means of instituting a culture of peace in primary and secondary schools. Similar activities, according to the assistant headmaster in Atiak, were undertaken as part of peace education (CM-A66, interviewed5/05/10). In the peace debates the students discussed different social issues facing their communities. One of the NGO informants claimed that peace club debates turned out to be one of their most successful projects (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10). This is because the debates increased youth involvement in the community; introduced youth agency in peacebuilding; and created an increased awareness of self-reliance contrary to the acquired NGO dependency in the IDP camps. For example, the use of debates in schools created a forum for mutual exchange among the youth. A local peacebuilding coordinator observed that:

> *"We have been carrying out peacebuilding in schools. The method that we have used and has become popular is the debate system. We encourage students to debate on different social issues of conflict in order to analyse the various sides to the conflict. The students learn to listen to different views,*

respect opinions that are different from theirs and conduct the debate with patience and understanding. Despite the fact that our students have known violence all their lives, I still think they can learn a culture of peace – we want them to know that the best way to solve their conflicts is not through violence" (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10).

Reintegration of the youth in post-conflict settings was crucial for the sustainability of peace. A peacebuilding analyst from a government peace education institution asserted that the youth were an easy prey to rebel recruitment (UG-PO54, interviewed 15/05/10). Hence training the youth to learn how to dialogue and manage their conflicts was important for their reintegration into the community.

NGOs, in conducting peace education, applied a transformative approach to learning which puts emphasis on self-formation and relationship building. This was evidenced by the explanations that the participants gave in reference to the impact of peace education. For example, a community participant to peace activities in Gulu asserted that: "You cannot just talk about peace without being convinced about it. I think that we need to learn to acquire a way of peace, and how we should live peacefully" (CM-G62, interviewed 16/02/10). Four NGOs, two local and two international, affirmed that they have a strong religious orientation: they pray together as staff; they pray with their participants; and they embed religious values to their approach to peacebuilding.

As part of community integration through peace education the youth, mostly formerly abducted, performed cultural dances in the community. A peacebuilding coordinator from a local NGO opined that the use of cultural dances rejuvenated the youth to play and work together, as well as learn about their culture and take pride in it (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10). This sense

of belonging, according to one of the peacebuilding coordinators of an international NGO not only led to mutual recognition among the youth, but also between the youth and the community (LNGO-PO48, 19/03/10). Cultural dances by the youth had become popular in both Gulu and Atiak. The dances were performed in public places and created a transitional space for the formerly abducted persons and former combatants to be accepted by the community. These peace initiatives increased the bonding amongst the youth and community members, and encouraged innovation and participation in common activities for peace.

Participants cited several examples to demonstrate how the youth had been transformed: there were cases of students intervening to stop fighting between their colleagues; the girl education movement (GEM) in Gulu, which was a student initiative to support girl education, created a good opportunity for students to participate in peacebuilding. In one of the schools, for example, students took the initiative of bringing back to school a girl who had been married at an early age of 11; GEM also raised awareness among the girls not to accept early marriages. As I have noted in reference to Atiak above, some students helped the old and vulnerable in the community by constructing their houses.

One of the youth participants in peace education activities in Atiak affirmed that the sessions offered him an opportunity to discuss the different challenges of building peace, such as forgiveness and reconciliation, land dispute and mutual acceptance (CM-A64, interviewed 17/02/10). Peace education thus created a

transitional space for integration and relationship building for the youth. The transitional space offered an opportunity to move from conflict to learning a culture of peace as well as discussing viable means of earning a living. The above participant was emphatic that most youth felt that they had been neglected and left without any jobs or competitive education. Hence peace education programmes helped them to feel part and parcel of the community.

A peacebuilding coordinator from a local NGO confirmed that peace education programmes were part of building the safety nets for the youth in the community (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10). She observed that "the cultural, social and political safety nets of our society were destroyed during the war. We now have to create new ones to support our youth." On further interrogation, the creation of 'new safety nets' mainly referred to peace education programmes aimed at fully integrating the youth into the community; encouraging the elders to teach the youth moral values for social cohesion; and educating the communities to be aware of the needs of the youth.

One of the major challenges for peace education both in Gulu and Atiak lay in the implementation process of the learned skills. While schools were the first milieus of learning, the acquired skills needed to be realized in the community. Thus, as one peace coordinator from an international NGO asserted: "If the community does not portray a culture of peace and demonstrate efforts towards a culture of peace, students will find it difficult to be agents of change" (INGO-PO52, interviewed 2/05/10). In Atiak an assistant headmaster of a local primary school observed that the region had witnessed a lot of violence and that it was

an uphill task to change the community's attitudes and perceptions (CM-A66, 5/05/10).

Part IV: Theories of Change: Impact Assessment

I was interested in finding out what theories of change drove the NGOs and local communities in Gulu and Atiak in their peacebuilding activities. By theories of change I mean the conceptualization of sociological frameworks of change based on individual, group, cultural, religious and political values. These theories define the kinds of social change that people would like to see and how they would like to achieve them. Interrogations with the NGOs and the local community gave me the impression that they did not posses clear theories of change. However, further examination of the NGO and local community peacebuilding practice demonstrated that theories of change were embedded and not explicit.

The research findings show that the general expectation of all NGOs interviewed was that it was important to assess the impact of peacebuilding programmes on the community (see Box 4 below). This entailed an assessment of programme implementation and beneficiary satisfaction.

Box 4 Participants' perceptions on programme assessment

- "in my organization we conduct bi-annual evaluation of our peacebuilding programmes in order to understand the community's expectations" (INGO-PO37, interviewed 14/02/10)
- "if you don't assess your programmes it would be very difficult to plan your activities more effectively" (LNGO-PO32, interviewed 25/01/10)
- "the community resource persons that we have trained have been critical in helping us understand the relevance of our peace activities in the community" (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10)
- "it is very important to have a clear strategy of programme evaluation" (INGO-PC46, interviewed 25/02/10)

On the other hand the community members in both Gulu and Atiak were keen on peacebuilding interventions that changed the social status of their lives, whether through conflict mediation or provision of basic needs. Hence, the communities in Gulu and Atiak did not have a systematic methodology of impact assessment of peacebuilding interventions. The community tended to assess the peacebuilding activities based on the extent to which these activities were changing their lives through: provision of basic needs; income generating activities; support of education and health institutions; vocational training for the formerly abducted persons; and land dispute resolution. The success of such interventions gave a positive evaluation to peacebuilding activities both in Gulu and Atiak. I will now discuss the NGO approaches to peacebuilding and community responses in Gulu while comparing these with some of the peace initiatives in Atiak.

Most organizations (14 out of 20) referred to the assessment exercise as monitoring and evaluation (M&E). However, the understanding of what M&E referred to varied from organization to organization. One participant from an international organization asserted that in order to make the process more transparent, some NGOs invited an external consultant to evaluate the programmes: “our donors send a consultant every year to evaluate our programmes and make recommendations for the future” (INGO-PO36, 16/01/10); another confirmed that “we conduct regular evaluation by asking the community about their expectations and whether these were being met” (LNGO-PO32, interviewed 25/01/10); a programme officer of a government institution observed that her organization relied on the prescribed Logical Framework

Approach (LFA)[66], also known as log-frames, to determine whether the original project proposal was meeting its objectives (UG-PO41, interviewed 12/03/10). Hence, the approaches used for impact assessment were not standardized, and some organizations gave the impression that the methodological design of evaluations was not consistent within the organization and depended on the person in-charge of the M&E.

The majority (18 out of 27) of the NGO participants used log-frame methods which place targeted objectives against expected outcomes. An examination of a log-frame approach applied by the NGOs in their project design, monitoring and evaluation gave me a clear indication of the targeted changes; the indicators to look for in evaluating the success of the project; and the monitoring mechanisms used to ensure that the goals were being met. However, when I posed the question - *what theory of change was behind the log-frame formulation* - I could not get a straight forward answer.

It is however understandable that the programme coordinators could not fully articulate the theories of change since their focus was mainly on addressing the challenging issues at hand. In fact, they were able to explain the means and processes used to get to the desired changes, but not a refined theory of change with which they were working.

[66] Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is a management tool that was first used by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The tool was developed by Practical Concepts Incorporated in 1969, and has since been adapted by many NGOs and organization. It facilitates the process of design, monitoring and evaluation of projects. ROSENBERG, L. J. & POSNER, L. D. 1979. *The logical framework: A manager's guide to a scientific approach to design and evaluation (USAID Document PN-ABN963 82060),* Washington, DC, Practical Concepts.

The different approaches to social change and evaluation on the impact of NGO interventions can generally be categorized under peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA). This tool was critical in identifying the changes realized and mitigating unintended consequences of conflict intervention. The tool was also important in adjusting the peacebuilding programmes to respond to the changing contextual dynamics. There was a general convergence, in concept and language, of what PCIA should entail. Hence, most NGOs (13 out of 20) observed that PCIA was characterized by an evaluation format which was helpful in determining: how an organization is implementing the project; whether the general goals and objectives are being met; existing divergences between goals and outcomes; the impact of conflict dynamics on the peace programme; and perceptions of the beneficiaries about the program. However, the majority of the NGOs (15 out of 20) were faced with the challenge of undertaking a thorough contextual analysis that could better inform their interventions. For these NGOs 'analysis' was limited to baseline survey. The NGOs confirmed that they did not have the capacity and time to undertake in-depth analysis due to limited funds and the urgency to respond to the immediate social needs. However, bigger inter-governmental NGOs were able to afford a thorough social analysis undertaken by a professional researcher.

The Peace, Conflict and Impact Assessment (PCIA) was often undertaken under four main indicators. First was *quantitative change* assessment that looked at the number of people that had been reached through training, peace committees, community resource persons and income generating activities; and new peace groups that had emerged as a result of the NGO peace interventions. For peace agents in Atiak, local participation was an important indicator for

genuine motivation for participating in peacebuilding. An elder in Atiak observed: "when the community members attend our peace meetings, we know they are interested" (CM-A61, interviewed 14/03/10). This approach to assessment was important because it reflected the extent to which the community was interested in participating in peacebuilding activities and how this was changing their lives. The analysis of the NGO approach to PCIA further revealed that assessment was carried out based on the achievement of the programming objectives and goals according to stipulations provided in the *agreement* with the donors.

The second was *qualitative change* that touched on people's behaviour. The focus here was on changing people's attitudes on violence, and assessing the extent to which this had changed the quality of life in the community. Thus, the main objective was to build a culture of peace that could replace the culture of violence acquired from the protracted conflicts. In this category the focus was on how people's lives had changed; the level of commitment to peacebuilding activities; and the emerging new peacebuilding discourse and practice. This approach to assessment, as I have noted above, was important to communities both in Gulu and Atiak. For example, a community participant in Atiak asserted that "efforts by the elders and LC3 to mediate on land disputes have calmed down some of the inter-family tensions we used to have" (CM-A68, interviewed 17/02/10). I got similar responses from informal interviews in both Gulu and Atiak. One of the peace coordinators from a local NGO confirmed that he was contented that since their primary objective was to empower women through income generating activities, most women had attained economic independence and could support their own families (LNGO-PC006, interviewed 15/02/10). Such an impact could be evaluated further to examine secondary achievements

such as education of the children through the earned income, improved diet for the family and better living conditions. Hence, in the general assessment, it was important to consider the ripple effects such as: increased social capital within the community; improved opportunities for the education of children; and improved community participation in peacebuilding activities by parents and children.

Qualitative change was also linked to the *empowerment of the local community* and assessment on the extent to which individuals and groups took initiatives to engage in peace activities. The dialogue of action between the NGOs and community facilitated processes of empowerment and ownership of the peacebuilding programmes. The empowerment discourse varied among participants. Most interviews showed that the aim of empowerment programmes was to increase the capacity of the local participants to the extent that the activities were self-sustaining. Coupled with this were efforts towards enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of participants involved in different activities of community peace building. Empowerment was also used to refer to increasing levels of awareness about human rights abuses, poverty, substance abuse, insecurity, income generating activities and hygiene, all with the intention of countering the negative factors that reduce human dignity. For example, one of the programme officers of an international NGO observed that due to the intensive intervention by NGOs in the education sector, there was a tremendous improvement in education performance: whereas in 2008 there was only one student at secondary school level who got a first grade mark in the national exams, in 2009 there were 23 (INGO-PO52, interviewed 7/05/10). Income generating activities (IGA) were also initiated as a means of helping individuals

and groups meet their daily economic needs. This approach to peacebuilding was not pronounced in Atiak due to limited resources and poverty in the area.

Some community participants (6 out of 9 from Gulu) argued that NGOs had pre-tailored activities based on what they had identified as the primary needs of the community. They said that some NGOs had put emphasis on improving food production by supplying farming inputs. Three community participants from Gulu complained that two NGOs were distributing genetically modified seeds which could not be re-planted once harvested. This practice increased dependency rates and made farming expensive since new seeds had to be bought for every planting season. The inconsistencies in the implementation of some of the NGO programmes limited the success of NGO-driven empowerment. The trial and error indicated above, fast-track solutions such as the use of genetically modified seeds, and limitations of funding, made these interventions unsustainable in some cases.

In a contrasting case narrated by a resident from Atiak, a group of women attempted to farm but the crops failed (CM-A61, interviewed 14/03/10). They subsequently opted to take a bank loan in order to start a chicken farm that would provide eggs for their families and generate income from the sale of eggs. The project turned out to be successful. This observation reveals the fact that, unlike in Gulu where NGOs supported income generating activities, in Atiak the only option the community had was to take a bank loan. However, because of the impoverished nature of Atiak, the banks would only give loans to groups that had viable income generating activities. Besides, there were no banks in Atiak and interested groups could only access them in Gulu.

The third indicator to social change was evidenced by the *people's motivation to participating in peacebuilding activities.* Increased number of popular participation in peacebuilding activities was an indication of commitment to social change. Personal conviction and motivation were key factors for individual and group participation in peace activities both in Gulu and Atiak, as shown in Box 5 below.

Box 5 Participants' motivation for participation in peacebuilding

- "I feel that we all have a duty to change our society and address our differences" (CM-A003, interviewed 17/02/10)
- "This war is not our war, but the impact it has left on us is now a matter of concern for all of us. This is why I work for peace" (LC3-A39, interviewed 22/02/10)
- "Without commitment to peace we cannot expect to see a different Acholi land" (LNGO-PO42, interviewed 14/03/10)
- "I have been in community peace committee for the last 8 years because I believe it is important to work for peace" (CM-G55, interviewed 09/05/10)

Community participants in Gulu observed that they had peacebuilding activities in place even before the involvement of NGOs in peacebuilding activities. Similar observations were made in Atiak. The fact of suffering together over many years of conflict motivated some community members to participate in peacebuilding activities as a way of bringing change. The coming of the NGOs in Gulu boosted the number of peacebuilding activities and encouraged popular participation in peacebuilding, but it did not become the ultimate determining factor in community participation.

Five out of twenty seven NGO participants affirmed that their conviction to work for peace was motivated by personal experiences or conflict related incidences that had led to personal injury or death of a family member. A participant from Atiak (control population) narrated his difficult journey to working for peace:

> "*I saw it happen even though I was only seven years old. The day the LRA rebels attacked Atiak all the adults and youth were rounded together early morning at 5am. My parents hid themselves and remained safe. The rest of us, with my brothers and sisters and other neighbours were all bundled together and taken to a large playing field. At the play field, they separated some of us (mostly women and children) from the rest, and then opened fire on more than 250 people, killing most of them. My two elder brothers were among those who were killed that morning. I have grown up with this pain and fear in me. But I am more convinced than ever that as young people we have a big role to play in bringing peace to this land. I am in a 'youth group for peace' and we work together to help our community*" (CM-A64, interviewed 17/02/10).

I was particularly moved by this experience. It brought closer to me the reality of the atrocities that were committed during the war. To listen to this young woman speak was one of the most emotional moments of my research. Her difficult reality of conflict retrospectively became for her a moment of self transformation. The experience was personalized and provoked the conviction to work for peace.

Archbishop Odama, the leader of ARLPI expressed how an incident of meeting a starving child on a road became a transformative experience. He says:

> "*One day when I was walking along the road I was disturbed by the pathetic situation of the children. One particular child struck me. She was about 11-12 years -the legs were swollen, she was with other children walking to town for safety. They had walked for many kilometres. I said to myself this innocent child is suffering for nothing. We must do something to reverse this situation. This has to change. That experience hit me so hard"* (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10).

The inter-subjective encounter with the suffering children became a moment of dialogue with the reality. The pathetic condition of the children communicated

the reality of the repercussions of war. In that brief encounter Archbishop Odama experienced an internal conversion that later became a fundamental motivation to work for peace. There was no verbal communication, instead the inter-subjective encounter *between the noses* revealed an enriched communication that transformed into social action against the impact of violence.

A programme officer from a local NGO affirmed that her organization was founded in response to the abduction of one hundred and thirty nine girls from St Mary's College in northern Uganda (LNGO-PO37, interviewed14/02/11). Temmerman (2001) narrates in details how the girls were abducted, and how Sister Rachelle and Angelina, in collaboration with the school administration, the community and international networks managed to secure the release of most of the girls. Angelina, who had one of her daughters abducted, relentlessly advocated for the release of the remaining girls in the bush, and in 1998 she won a UN Prize for Peace (Temmerman, 2001:152). She founded an advocacy NGO known as Concerned Parents Association (CPA). A programme officer in the same organization explained to me in an interview that when most of the girls were released the NGO focused on reconciling the parents with the former LRA commanders who had returned into the villages (LNGO-PO37, interviewed 14/02/10). The NGO has since expanded its activities to include broader issues of community peacebuilding such as land dispute resolution and inter-family and clan reconciliation.

The community had for a long time been motivated by the urgency of reconciling estranged families and individuals; and the desire to work together in solidarity in addressing the impact of the protracted conflict on the community. In Atiak the

community participation in peacebuilding activities, as I have noted above, was mainly driven by the conviction that peacebuilding was everyone's responsibility. Both local government and cultural leaders played an important role in raising awareness about participation in peacebuilding activities.

Remuneration was also highlighted as a motivating factor, particularly in Gulu. Some participants (4 from NGOs and 3 from local community) affirmed that their participation in peacebuilding activities was motivated by the remuneration they were receiving. This group sample expressed the fact that working for peace was a good opportunity to access NGO jobs and earn income particularly given that job opportunities were limited. One participant from a local NGO in Gulu argued that despite working for financial remuneration he was still convinced that northern Uganda needed peace and that his work was an important contribution (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10). The NGO practice of financially rewarding participants for attending peacebuilding workshops, to some extent, distracted the spontaneous community participation. The above participant from Gulu added that some community members had developed the habit of attending multiple workshops to earn money referred to as 'seating allowance'.[67] A local government official in Gulu working as an LC3 stated that:

> *"We do not need a seating allowance to work for peace. In the previous years, NGOs created this incentive which subsequently affected the spontaneous participation of our community members. We have been discouraging this practice and we now see that some NGOs have stopped paying participants, except in special cases where they would reimburse transport money"* (LC3-G29, interviewed 28/01/10).

[67] Seating allowance refers to the stipend paid to participants at a workshop. There has been a tradition over the years especially among NGOs in Eastern Africa to pay a stipend to participants attending a workshop.

This observation is important in understanding the extent of the impact of NGO incentives on community participation in peacebuilding activities. The above participant added that while the stopping of 'seating allowance' discouraged a few individuals from participating in peacebuilding activities, the general community participation was not affected.

I made a distinction between salaried persons working with NGOs and community participants receiving incentives for their participation in peacebuilding activities. The salaried participants worked for a living or out of conviction for peace, and in some cases for both reasons. Community participants, as I shall demonstrate below, were strongly motivated to participate in peacebuilding activities even before the coming of the NGOs.

However, while there was motivation for peacebuilding activities in Atiak, peace agents did not have external support to increase their community mobilization for peace. Informal interviews with religious and community leaders in Atiak demonstrated that participation in peacebuilding activities was generally low and that the population was preoccupied with the provision of basic needs. One of the participants from the control population of Atiak noted that due to high poverty levels, the success of peace activities "depends on how the stomach is feeling…lack of enough food to eat affects any kind of listening or participation to our peace programmes" (CM-A61, interviewed 14/03/10). This analogy of the stomach vividly captured the daunting task of provision of the basic needs in the course of conducting peacebuilding activities.

However, despite NGOs' provision of basic needs and social services in Gulu, six out of nine community participants from Gulu confirmed that for most people, attainment of peace was equated to the provision of basic needs. Most community respondents (6 out of 9) from Gulu felt that while NGOs had tried their best to bring peace and provide basic needs, there were still big gaps particularly in supporting the youth. The high rates of unemployment and poverty limited the extent to which NGO peacebuilding activities could be assessed as successful. There was need to increase aid especially to the most vulnerable. However, these challenges could not be compared to Atiak that was highly impoverished.

The fourth indicator to impact assessment was linked to *sustainability* of peacebuilding activities. In Gulu, this was related to the fact that NGOs did not have sufficient funding to get the peace programmes running for a prolonged period of time. I found it interesting that in most NGO discourse, sustainability was linked to the support of the community motivation for peace and not necessarily to the financial resources. This meant that it was crucial to increase the capacity of the local peace agents so that they can continue the peace work without the NGO support. Thus, discussions about sustainability often evoked the empowerment discourse. For example, in response to the questions – *How do you ensure that your programmes are sustainable?* - The answers pointed towards capacity building of the community by increasing agents of peace. These agents were referred to by some organizations as community resource persons (CRPs). In relational constructionism the CRPs would be associated with communities of practice (CoP). One of the peacebuilding coordinators of a

local NGO in Gulu observed that “CRPs are our ears on the ground. They participate in our programme evaluation and hence help us respond to the needs of the community more effectively” (LNGO-PO37, interviewed 14/02/10).

The expectation was that once the CRPs had been trained in workshops they could become catalysts for peace, hence developing peace constituencies within the community. This view was expressed by participants from three international and five local NGOs. Lederach (2005:90) posits that a *critical mass* of peacebuilders can operate as peace catalyst to initiate a self-sustaining process that reproduces itself exponentially, independent of its original cause. In other words, the critical mass concept is founded on the principle that conscientization processes should reach a level where people feel they are ready to take on the peacebuilding process by themselves without depending on external agents, such as NGOs. Freire (1973) calls this level of self awareness *critical conscientization.* He views this in terms of empowerment for self-initiated action that counters structures of oppression. Conscientization and critical mass creation were reinforced through interactive exchanges between community members and relational responses to knowledge that were critical to social action.

In Atiak, as in Gulu, the concern was how to maintain people’s motivation in peacebuilding activities. Community leaders were particularly concerned about accompanying the youth to ensure that they embrace a peace culture. While there were support structures in the school and to some extent in the community, the challenge, as I have stated above, lay in the lack of employment opportunities. As a result, the main concern about sustainability of peace

initiatives was linked to the reintegration of the youth with the hope that they may not fall prey to a culture of violence. Similar sentiments were shared in Gulu by a community participant who underscored that: "the future of our peacebuilding work is the youth. If they are not interested in participating in what we are doing, then our efforts would be fruitless" (CM-G59, interviewed 13/03/10).

While in Gulu there was a common community appreciation of NGO peace interventions, in the control population of Atiak, the perceptions were different. There was a general sense of desperation for *real* peace. In the focus group discussions in Atiak the participants observed that the population was concerned about the fact that peace had not been fully realized (FG-A008, interviewed 14/03/10). They held the opinion that despite the general perception in the North that the war was over, most people in Atiak maintained a 'wait and see' attitude. This is because there was no assurance yet that the LRA had been defeated.

Similarly in Gulu, most NGOs (14 out of 20) struggled with the idea that the war was over and yet not over. The LRA was still at large in the DRC, Sudan and Central African Republic. There was a general fear amongst some parts of the population that the LRA could come back to attack the villages. A programme officer from a local NGO observed that:

> "*The bigger challenge is that political dynamics have changed – for example right now we don't have war, yet the war is still there; the fighting grounds have shifted to other countries where the LRA is operating...The transitional challenge is the bigger issue of concern – not many NGOs conceptually understand transitional justice issues"* (LNGO-PO45, interviewed12/01/10).

Conceptualizing a post-conflict reconstruction while conflict lingered became a daunting task for NGO peacebuilding.

Hence, NGOs' strategy of social change was based on the theory that catalyst interventions can stir processes of change. Thus, the majority of the NGO respondents (17 out of 27), both local and international, relied on *mediated-change processes* as a means of effecting change. This was effected through trained peace agents who became 'critical yeast' in mobilizing the community for change. This meant that NGOs saw themselves as process-mediators or catalysts whose primary objective was to facilitate processes of change. On the other hand the communities in both Gulu and Atiak evaluated peacebuilding activities based on the extent to which their lives had changed through the provision of basic needs, income generating activities and vocational training. However, these communities also embraced qualitative change in people's attitude and perceptions.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed at analyzing NGO peacebuilding approaches and the extent to which NGO conflict interventions were informed by the local reality of northern Uganda. This study, as I have indicated above, was conducted in Gulu, where there is NGO presence, and in the control population of Atiak where there was no NGO presence. The fact that there were peacebuilding activities going on in both Gulu and Atiak before the coming of the NGOs meant that the presence of NGOs was not the determinant factor for the continuation of peacebuilding activities in the region. However, the presence or lack of

presence of NGOs was an important factor in the approach to peacebuilding between Atiak and Gulu.

The presence of the NGOs in Gulu increased peacebuilding activities in comparison to Atiak where NGOs were absent. This was attributed to several factors such as NGOs' financial resources; competition and multiplication of peacebuilding activities between NGOs; provision of social services by NGOs, financial and logistic support of income generating groups (IGA); and support programmes for the integration of the youth. Atiak on the other hand was generally neglected, both politically and economically. It is located on the border with South Sudan and a common entry point for the LRA into Uganda. This meant that for many years there were high levels of insecurity and neither the government nor NGOs dared to make substantial investment in the area. Given the frequent attacks on the population by the LRA in the past and the general neglect of the area, the motivation for peace was not as high as in Gulu which had experienced relative peace for several years. Hence, while the community in Atiak had the motivation for working for peace, they did not have external support and similar levels of resources as in Gulu. As a result, undertaking peacebuilding activities was a more difficult task in comparison to the NGO-assisted Gulu.

The communities in both Gulu and Atiak were faced with five major challenges in peacebuilding: land disputes; the need for reconciliation of parties in conflict; lack of basic needs; human rights abuses; and reintegration of the formerly abducted persons and former LRA rebels. The community in Atiak responded to four of the above challenges by carrying out: mediation on land disputes through

application of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR); integration of the formerly abducted persons and former combatants; and reconciliation of individuals, groups and clans in conflict; and limited provision of basic needs such as repair and construction of houses for the old and vulnerable, and support to the homeless. NGOs on the other hand responded in varying degrees to all the challenges, given that they had more resources. While human rights advocacy could be interpreted as part of a liberal peace agenda it was also in line with the perceived needs of the community on the ground. The need to support marginalized women in Gulu, and to speak against the violence against the community by the LRA and GOU, showed that an external intervention in these particular cases was responding to the urgent need to address human suffering. This was done in collaboration with the community. The fact that communities in Atiak and Gulu generally responded to similar challenges and in more or less similar ways as the NGOs, meant that NGO peacebuilding to a great extent responded to issues that resonated with the needs of the community on the ground.

Peacebuilding initiatives in the community engendered communities of peacebuilding (peace practitioners, peace committees, community resource persons, income generating groups, cultural and political leaders), also referred to as communities of practice (CoP) in relational constructionism. The analysis demonstrates that NGOs used an interactive approach to creating communities of peace and developing peacebuilding discourse and practice. These communities generated into catalysts for change, mobilizing more people to become peace agents committed to transforming the community from a protracted culture of violence to one of peace and reconciliation. In light of

relational constructionism this approach aimed at relationship building and sense-making through dialogical encounters that bridged differences between diverse parties and individuals.

NGOs and local communities (in Gulu and Atiak) were confronted with the challenge of competing needs on the ground. Poverty and unemployment posed a real threat to participation in peacebuilding activities especially among the youth. Thus, initiation of income generating activities (IGA) as a means of economically supporting families and vulnerable individuals was a positive strategy. The IGA provided an avenue for participation in peacebuilding and conflict intervention. Hence, some of the members participating in IGA were encouraged to initiate peacebuilding activities in the community. However, the communities in Atiak did not have external support for IGA, making it difficult for the marginalized members of the community.

I was interested in finding out the theories of change used by NGOs and communities in Gulu and Atiak. As I have demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six social change was based on visible outcomes. This was based on the fact that NGOs used as indicators of change: quantifiable numbers of people reached, groups formed, activities of peace initiated and innovative interventions carried out. For both the community in Gulu and Atiak, change was assessed based on how people's lives had changed through provision of basic needs, vocational training, income generating activities and educational facilities. However, the communities in Gulu and Atiak also evaluated peacebuilding activities based on qualitative experiences of change in people's lives and how people had been transformed internally through change of attitudes and

perceptions; reduced incidences of conflict; embracing of a more relational and dialogical approach to conflict resolution; and relationship building through reconciliation, alternative dispute resolution especially in land conflicts.

The main theory of change applied by the NGOs can be said to be based on *mediated change processes.* This meant that NGOs acted as catalysts to change and not guarantors of change. They trained and relied on individuals and groups to act as 'critical yeast' or catalysts to social change. This process produced a peace constituency composed of individuals and groups such as community leaders, income generating groups and community resource persons (CRPs) for peacebuilding activities.

The discussions in this chapter have shown that culturally-based approaches to reconciliation were not as widely practised as purported by the existing peacebuilding literature on northern Uganda. These approaches were still at nascent stages despite having been executed in some of the villages. There were a lot of discussions in the community on how to use the reconciliation rituals in manner that would bring positive change in the community. NGOs institutionalized the practice of reconciliation through cultural rituals, despite the fact that the community was not quite ready for it. This demonstrated how the NGOs interventions, in some cases, were not well grounded in the needs of the people. However, at same time this manifests the complex nature of the Uganda conflict and how the exploration of mechanisms of peacebuilding by both the local community and NGOs was a daunting task.

This chapter has provided a foundation for understanding the strategies of peacebuilding applied by the NGOs and local communities which I discuss in the next chapter. Peacebuilding approaches explained in this chapter relied on relationship building as a means of constructing new reality of peace. Hence, relational constructionism emerged as an important strategy in peacebuilding approaches.

Chapter Six: Relational Constructionism in NGO Peacebuilding

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the different levels of relational constructionism between the NGOs, donors and community. I will also examine how the community in Atiak applied relational constructionism in its peacebuilding activities. While in the previous chapter I examined the NGO and community approaches to peacebuilding,[68] in this chapter I will look at the strategies behind those approaches. I will therefore discuss the embedded processes of relational constructionism between different agents of peacebuilding, and how they influenced the peacebuilding discourse and practice in northern Uganda. I will re-visit the research question, and assess the extent to which NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda was informed by the local reality and/or external influences.

In order to demonstrate the levels of relational constructionism between NGOs, donors and community, I will apply Lederach's (1997) pyramid framework that depicts multi-level interactions in peacebuilding processes. My analysis will show strengths and limitations of Lederach's pyramid framework.

Lederach explains that peacebuilding practice is realized at three interrelated leadership levels. The *top level* refers to the decision-makers who are

[68] In the preceding chapter I outlined three main approaches to NGO peacebuilding: third party mediation in land dispute resolution; human rights advocacy (mainly in Gulu); and transitional justice and the challenge of reintegration in both Gulu and Atiak.

represented by government, political, and inter-regional leaders. In this discussion, the top level represents donor agencies and their governments, as well as the local government. NGOs operate at this high level in order to influence policies and social political actions; the second is the *middle range leadership* that includes NGOs, civil society, religious leaders and other influential individuals; the third is the *grassroots leadership* that includes cultural leaders, NGOs, and peace communities. Lederach (1997:43) notes that while conflict is often experienced horizontally at the grassroots level, the implications of conflict have far reaching vertical implications between the three levels.

It is important to note that Lederach's pyramid model does not fully capture the interactive relationship between different levels of the pyramid. He limits the top-level to political and military leaders, but adds religious leaders as well. Lederach observes that the top level operates under a top-down model. Similarly, the middle and grassroots levels are focused on peacebuilding approaches that do not deliberately interact with the top level leadership except when the grassroots experiences exert pressure on top leadership by clamouring for change or when the problem solving workshops lead to processes of change. Lederach refers to the grassroots approach as bottom-up (1997:52).

From a relational constructionism approach I demonstrate how NGOs operated not just in the grassroots and middle-range leadership, but also in the top level leadership. As I shall elaborate, NGOs undertook a deliberate approach to conflict intervention at all the three levels by building relationships and

influencing peacebuilding decisions between different peace agents. Thus, while I apply Lederach's pyramid framework to analyse NGO interactive peacebuilding in relational constructionism, my analysis goes further than the pyramid portrays. In Atiak relational constructionism within the pyramid model was mainly experienced at the grassroots level. Hence, Atiak will not feature in the discussions on the top and middle range leadership.

I use the pyramid framework to articulate three main points of NGO peacebuilding within the discourse of relational constructionism: first is the ***top leadership*** level where I discuss the perceptions on conceptualization of peacebuilding and the interactions that ensued between the NGOs and donor agencies. The NGO-donor interaction is a complex process of co-construction of peacebuilding discourse and practice. The discussion evaluates the extent to which NGOs implement externally conceptualized construction of peacebuilding under the influence of liberal peace, and/or take into account the contextual imperatives of peacebuilding. The second is the ***middle-range leadership*** which networks to mediate issues of concern between the top level and grassroots leadership. This level of leadership has mainly been active in creating dynamic interactions between initiatives for conflict mitigation on the ground and decision making at the top level. This process has mainly been *relational* hence applying the principles of relational constructionism that I have explained in Chapter Three. Networking and advocacy have also been used in achieving relational constructionism at this level. The third is ***grassroots leadership*** undertaken mainly through networking with peacebuilding communities in collaboration with the NGOs. In Atiak the interactions were mainly between cultural and

government leaders, peace agents as well as the general community. The interactions in both Gulu and Atiak aimed at building a peace constituency through diverse levels of interactions and dialogical encounters.

Approach to the Analysis of the Findings

My primary focus was to examine the levels of NGO interactions and networked collaboration in peacebuilding activities. I realized that I needed to understand the strategy and dynamism behind the different approaches to peacebuilding undertaken by the NGOs and the community in Gulu, as well as by the community peace agents in Atiak. I have elaborated these approaches in Chapter Five. The peacebuilding approaches showed that there was a high level of collaboration and networking that influenced the peacebuilding discourse and practice. In this section I focus on understanding the different co-constructions of peace at the grassroots, middle and top levels, and how the three interconnected in peacebuilding processes. This will highlight the strategies behind the peacebuilding approaches.

At the *top leadership level* my main interest was to understand how NGOs related with the donors, and how this influenced NGO peacebuilding discourse and practice. I interrogated NGO participants about their relationship with the donors (and their governments) and how this impacted the process of peacebuilding in project conceptualization, implementation and evaluation. I also interrogated the donor agencies on their approach to relating with their NGO beneficiaries and the diverse levels of dialogue in project

conceptualization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. I mainly wanted to establish the extent to which the conceptualization and implementation of NGO peacebuilding programmes were influenced by the donors. The investigations equally demonstrated how contextual imperatives played in the conceptualization of peacebuilding. I was also interested in understanding the different levels of perception of NGO peacebuilding: the donor and NGO perceptions of peacebuilding, respectively; and the NGO perception on the impact of NGO-donor relationship on peacebuilding discourse and practice.

I demonstrate in the analysis that, contrary to the liberal peace critics who assert that NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict was mainly influenced by the liberal peace agenda, there were diverse levels of dialogue between NGOs and donors that positively influenced the peacebuilding discourse and practice. NGOs, in negotiating for funding with the donors, experienced three levels of interaction. First, *constrained dialogue* which hampered the influencing role of the NGOs in project conceptualization and implementation. There were tensions between the actual needs on the ground and what the donors were pushing for. These cases were however isolated. Second, *negotiated agreements* which offered opportunities for mutual understanding. In this category NGOs engaged the donors in dialogical encounters in order to reach an agreed standard of operation. Third, *dialogical partnership* which was based on joint actions between the NGOs and donors. The concept of partnership was emphasized to bridge the donor-NGO relationship beyond the *giver-receiver* characterization.

My findings further show that NGOs that had consistently worked with the same donors for an extended period of time had built trust and confidence in each other. This was evidenced by the fact that some NGOs had worked with the same donors for many years and established a good working relationship. In addition 14 NGOs reported that their relationship with the respective donors was based on mutual understanding, trust and a common exploration for best approaches in peacebuilding. This approach influenced the way in which projects were negotiated, designed and implemented. It would however be naive to assume that NGOs that experienced a positive relationship with donors had equal power relations. The two constantly engaged each other in dialogical negotiations within the tensions of power relations. In situations where partnership, dialogue and consultations had developed through trust-building, there was an interactive exchange between the community-NGO relationships and NGO-donor relationships, respectively.

The community emerged as the interacting agent in the middle, mediating conversations between NGOs and donors. In other words, contextual imperatives from the community, in most cases, guided the course of dialogue (between NGOs and donors) and influenced the conceptualization and implementation of the peacebuilding programmes. NGOs on the other hand emerged as the interlinking mediators of peacebuilding processes, as I had noted in Chapter Five. In fact, the majority of the NGOs were of the opinion that their approach to peacebuilding was based on the assessment of the needs on the ground. Thus, trust-building went hand in hand with relationship building, which in turn led to a co-constructed peacebuilding discourse and practice.

At the *middle range leadership* I focused on understanding how NGOs influenced the discourse and practice of peacebuilding in their interactions with different agents in conflict. The agents were mainly the government, rebels, International Criminal Court (ICC), international and local community. I interrogated the NGOs on their approaches to networking for social change; their strategy in constructing, with different agents, alternatives-to-violence discourse; and how the needs in the community influenced and interacted with their approach to peacebuilding in the middle-range leadership level. I also interrogated the NGOs about their understanding on the role of the ICC and how this had impacted on the peacebuilding activities. I extended the question to the local community in order to establish the general perception of the role of ICC. I further examined how NGO coordination and networking influenced the peacebuilding discourse and practice.

Strategies in relational constructionism such as dialogical conversations, mutual recognition, negotiations on co-construction of new realities of peace, and interactive sense-making were applied as a means of conflict intervention. Networking and advocacy were also applied by the NGOs in developing alternatives-to-violence discourse. The analysis, as I have highlighted in Chapter Five, illustrates that during the conflict period advocacy activities increased international awareness on the conflict in northern Uganda. NGOs also dialogued amongst themselves through coordination meetings that were critical in establishing a strategy for community service provision, conflict mediation and dialogue with the donors.

In the post-conflict advocacy period activities were dominated by calls for forgiveness and reconciliation, and reconsideration of the ICC indictment on the LRA in order to facilitate the peace process. The strategy applied by the NGOs in addressing the discordant views was mainly through dialogical conversations, persuasive engagements and lobbying.

At the *grassroots leadership level* my interrogation with the participants aimed at finding out how NGOs were developing a peacebuilding community amongst the local population and between the NGOs and the local community. I interrogated both NGOs and local community in order to establish how these different sectors interacted in undertaking peacebuilding activities; community participation in diverse formation and training activities conducted by the NGOs; peacebuilding groups and networks that emerged and how they formed spaces for dialogue and interaction; and the extent to which community peacebuilding was appreciated by the local population.

The common thread in the three levels of peacebuilding above is that the community was at the centre of the various interventions both in Gulu and Atiak. The diverse levels of interaction allowed for dialogue and exchange, and construction of a new reality of peace. Unlike in Lederach's pyramid framework that limits the role of NGOs to the grassroots and middle-range levels, NGOs worked at all the three levels.

The Pyramid Framework

The pyramid framework provides the lenses through which one can understand, in more general terms, how the various peacebuilding interventions and processes interact. In explaining the pyramid concept Lederach (1997:38) observes that the broader base at the bottom (grassroots) represents the majority of the population (refer to Figure 2 below); the pinnacle corresponds to a handful of leaders or top institutions; and the middle range leadership has a sizeable number of institutions, organizations and individuals. Similar concept has been used in multi-track diplomacy to explain how different conflicting parties interact at different levels of conflict.

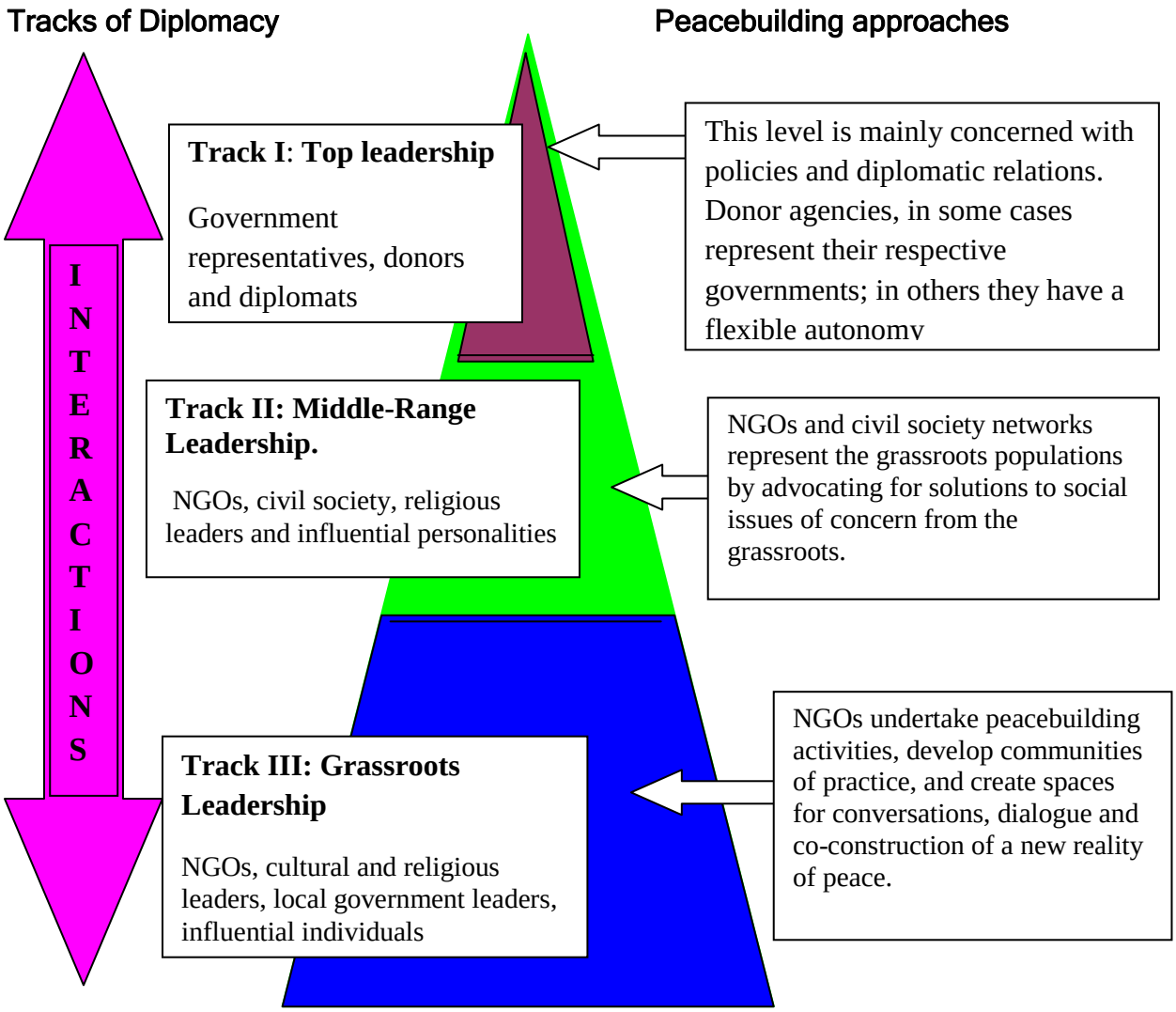
The term *Track 1* has been used to refer to the top leadership or the decision makers at government level (Fisher, 2006, Chigas, 2007:554). Here the traditional inter-state diplomacy is observed and interests of nations are guarded. Others have identified Track 1.5 which refers to unofficial mediators operating with top level leadership or official diplomacy in conflict mediation (Mapendere, 2000:76, Chigas, 2007:555). The mediation is often carried out by organizations or individuals who do not represent any government.

Track 2 refers to the middle range leadership that concerns itself with diplomacy at the top leadership level and the grassroots concerns. The term *track-two diplomacy* was coined by the former U.S. Foreign Service officer, Joseph Montville who used it to denote "unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversarial groups or nations with the goals of developing strategies, influencing public opinions and organizing human and material

resources in ways that might help resolve the conflict'' (Montville, 1991:262). Montville broadened his definition to include "interactions that develop strategies, affect public opinion, or mobilize resources to support conflict resolution" (Fisher, 1997a:117). Track 2 also refers to peacebuilding processes that engage both leaders at the top level and the grassroots population (Pearson, 2001:281).

In addition, Track 3 has recently emerged to refer to peace initiatives at the grassroots level, but with both national and international impact on finding solutions to the problems on the ground. The agents at this level engage in activities that bypass diplomatic channels, are national and transnational in nature and operate within a network of different individuals and organizations (Kraft, 2002:49). NGOs fall into this category.

Figure 2: **Pyramid Framework** (Adapted from John Paul Lederach, 1997)



Böhmelt (2010:167) uses the term 'Tracks of Diplomacy' (ToD) to refer to multi-level approach to conflict resolution. He defines ToD as "as diplomatic initiatives by outside state or non-state parties to transform a dispute by communicating information, proposing new solutions, and directly influencing the crisis using carrots and sticks that can help generate movement towards potentially overlapping bargaining positions." He underscores that the interactive process between Tracks 1-3 is critical in the facilitation of peace processes and activities. Thus, in situations where Track 1 diplomacy is facilitated by unofficial approaches there would be higher chances of reaching success and ensuring grassroots support for the conflict resolution (Böhmelt, 2010:168).

My main focus was on the multi-track approach applied by NGOs in peacebuilding activities at different levels. The multi-track denotes a 'multi-track diplomacy' (Sewak and Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 2005), which facilitates "a complex web of approaches, roles, strategies and activities employed by diverse actors at different stages of conflict development, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building" (Sewak and Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 2005:11). Multi-track diplomacy also implies 'field diplomacy' (Reychler, 2001; Opongo, 2006). As I have explained elsewhere (Opongo, 2006), the term *field diplomacy* was coined by R. Moreels, a former president of the Médicins Sans Frontières in Belgium, while working as a surgeon in conflict zones. He came to the realization that the official and non-official diplomacy was absent in the field or grassroots contexts. He subsequently proposed that NGOs

could have an active role in transforming situations of conflict in which they work by linking grassroots experiences to decision making structures (Opongo, 2006).

Reychler (2001:92-93) observes that *field diplomacy* is characterized by: *credible presence* in the field – this means being in contact with the dynamics of conflict as well as building trust among the people in conflict; *commitment to sustainable* peace which entails staying long enough in the field to accompany the peace initiatives; *engagement of the people* in the peace process in order for them to be part and parcel of the conflict intervention processes; initiation of *cost-effective* peace-building activities that can continue for a long time; lastly, development of a *coherent peace architecture* that is grounded on good analysis, realizable plan and clear implementation process.

NGOs applied relational constructionism in multi-track approach to peacebuilding. This approach increased dialogue and interaction between different agencies: donor agencies and governments, NGOs, different leaders (religious, community, cultural and political) and the community in general. Peacebuilding activities, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, have been experienced at different levels of the society.

I will now discuss how relational constructionism has been embedded in the different levels of peacebuilding practice (NGO-donor-community) in northern Uganda in order to establish the extent to which NGO peacebuilding is informed

by the local reality and/or external influences. I will also discuss relational constructionism at grassroots level in Atiak.

Part I: Top Level Leadership: Liberal Peace Dynamics in NGO Peacebuilding

Relational Constructionism in NGO-Donor-Community Relationship

The interviews revealed that one of the major concerns for the NGOs was sustainable funding. As a result, funding negotiations and discussions provided spaces for dialogue, mutual interaction, interpretation of the contextual challenges, prioritization of peacebuilding activities and assessment of the impact on the ground. Even in situations where there seem to have been coercive processes to get the NGOs to respect the demands of the donors the embedded levels of dialogue revealed how funding constraints occasioned spaces for dialogue.

The shift in funding cycle occurred after the 2006 peace talks which achieved relative peace in the region. Northern Uganda has since been seen as a stable region that is out of the emergency aid bracket. This led to funding cuts. For example the UNOCHA (2010:6) reports that in 2009 funding for northern Uganda dropped considerably: "There was…a significant decrease in the humanitarian appeal ($247 million for 2009, down from $374 million for 2008 and $350 million for 2007) amid anticipated increased presence and impact of recovery and developmental programming to benefit returning IDPs." This meant that there were programmes that never met their targeted objectives or were cancelled for lack of funding

All the organizations interviewed relied on external funding for their activities. There were two levels of funding sources: first was *direct funding* from a funding agency (mostly Europe or USA) to the organization on the ground; second was *subcontracted funding* from an international organization which had direct government funding. There were different layers of interactive relationships that made funding processes much more complex than apparently perceived. The major donors were often governments or externally based agencies who offered funds directly to larger NGOs that had multi-national operations. The recipient NGO subsequently became a secondary donor by funding a third level smaller organization in the field. The third level organizations occasionally subcontracted activities to other organizations in a partnership agreement.

This kind of chain funding demonstrated a high degree of interaction between the organizations, but at the same time displayed the various levels of power-play that would require a deeper analysis which I will develop below. There was a chain reaction at different levels of funding. Pressure exerted from the primary donor generated its ripple effect all the way to the lowest levels of the project implementation. One of the administrators of a funding NGO in Gulu observed that there was a mutual dialogue between the implementing NGO in the field and themselves as a funding agency (INGO-P47, interviewed 11/02/10). Similar positive relations were also realized by the major funding organizations with headquarters outside Uganda. The funding agencies expressed their contentment with the levels of dialogue experienced on the ground.

All the three major funding agencies had offices locally or regionally, making it easier to negotiate with the partners on the ground from a more informed point of view. There was evidence from 18 out of 27 NGO participants that over a period of about 8 years relationship with the donors had improved from less consultation to more consultation and mutual dialogue. The interviews showed that there had been constant consultations between the donors and NGOs on how peace projects should be run. This was evidenced by the use of the words such as, “partner”, “collaboration”, “dialogue”, “understanding” and “participation”, to denote the levels of interactive exchanges and consultations that took place between the NGOs, donors and local community.

The question of continuity and sustainability of NGO peacebuilding activities emerged as an obvious challenge for all the NGO informants. Twelve out of twenty seven NGO participants linked the issue of relationship with the donor to sustainability of the projects. One of the local NGO peace coordinators observed that “when you are talking about donor funding, you are talking about sustainability of the projects. We have discussed this issue many times, and it is one that we’ll have to deal with. But we need to keep talking to our donors so that we come to a common understanding” (LNGO-PC006, interviewed 15/02/10). The opinions of the rest of the participants varied. There were those who put emphasis on encouraging local mechanisms of resource mobilization; spontaneous community participation; and cultural education. Others focused on inculcating peacebuilding values in the community, especially amongst the young generation.

From the data analysis, I classified funding negotiations into three categories: constrained dialogue; negotiated agreements and dialogical partnership, which I explain below.

Constrained dialogue in NGO-Donor Relationship

Constrained dialogue was mainly experienced among NGOs that had been under restricted funding. In these circumstances the donor agency had specific objectives to realize, whether human rights, reconciliation or integration of the formerly abducted children. While initial perceptions of constrained funding gave the impression of lack of dialogue, further investigation showed that there was room for dialogue and re-negotiation of the project implementation. These activities were carried out through subcontracting of NGOs. Three out of nine international NGOs preferred subcontracting their activities to local and smaller international organizations. The others preferred carrying out activities by themselves or collaborating with others. The subcontracting approach to funding was contract-based and was often done through 'a call for proposals.' This meant that the funding agencies requested NGOs to submit proposals on specific activities with outlined objectives, time frame, target group and location. An administrator of a funding NGO articulated that in *contract funding* the NGO applying for the funds had to explain how it hoped to implement the project by demonstrating its local resources and capacity on the ground (INGO-PC47, interviewed 11/02/10).

In this process there is minimum dialogue on the negotiation over the direction the project should take. A programme director from an international funding agency underscored the conditionality of funding by stating that:

> *"We come up with an idea and say we would like interested organizations to implement it – interested organizations apply, and the winning bidder gets the contract to implement our idea. We purposely retain the right of certain approvals to ensure that our interests are taken into account: expenditures, financial procurement, accountability, and programming. We want them to fall into the framework of what we are thinking…"* (INGO-PC49, interviewed 12/02/10).

A few organizations were under this kind of contract and faced the challenge of maintaining a good relationship with the funding organization while at the same time responding to the needs of the people on the ground. The fact that the funding agencies interviewed had offices locally, meant that there was close monitoring of the recipient NGOs, thus putting pressure on the latter to deliver. In some cases NGO participants noted that there was incongruence between what the donors demanded and what the NGOs really wanted to do.

The balance between the needs on the ground and the 'current funding on sale' meant that the recipient NGOs had to either comply, negotiate further to reach a compromise or seek alternative funding that responded to the needs on the ground. One of the peace coordinators affirmed that most NGO activities were *donor-driven* (INGO-PO43, interviewed 26/02/10*)*:

> "*It is obvious that most of the NGO programmes are donor-driven. We have relied on external funding for a long time, primarily from the governments of Norway and Sweden. So the donor situation has been good. But given that the two-year period of funding ends this year, we will need to show to our donors why the programmes should continue. It's more like you dance to the tune of the donor"* (INGO-PO43, interviewed 26/02/10).

By 'donor-driven' she meant that the donors often had an upper hand in determining the conceptualization and implementation of the peace programmes.

The discourse on donor-NGO relations prompted me to interrogate the bigger international NGOs that had internal mechanisms for funding from their headquarters. I wanted to find out how relationships between the demands in the field were internally processed within the broader conceptualization of peacebuilding at the national, regional and international level. Three organizations matched this category of informants. In these organizations funding proposals from the field had to fit the broader budget lines from the headquarters. While the participants acknowledged that there was dialogue between the field staff and the headquarters, they also highlighted the existing tensions.

The participants from the three NGOs above expressed concern over the level of tension in negotiating for a common understanding on the needs from the ground. The tensions were linked to the fact that the fund raising strategies were centralized within the administrative structures of the headquarters. A peace coordinator of an international NGO observed how she struggled to get funds from the headquarters of her own organization:

> "*Sometimes there is tension between my office in the field and the headquarters in the US. There are cases where you see the need on the ground, you consult on the ground, you forward the proposal and they say 'no' because they do not have the designated funds, or they tell you that peacebuilding is no longer our priority and that I have to send a proposal on HIV/AIDS, because that is where money is currently designated"* (INGO-PC48, interviewed 19/03/10).

This approach to funding negotiations led to frustration on the part of the NGOs concerned. The balance between the needs on the ground and the 'current funding on sale' meant that the recipient NGOs had to comply or negotiate

further in order to reach a compromise. Another option would be seeking alternative funding that responded to the needs on the ground.

Five out of twenty NGOs confirmed that they had to seek alternative funding in situations where they had fallen out with the demands of the donors. Other participants gave varied responses: they tended to diversify their funding options by partnering with different donors; they explored local resources; and they faced difficulties with funding activities. However, while NGOs with less capacity in resource mobilization struggled to maintain independence in the selection and management of their activities, established NGOs with diversified sources of funding had more leverage in negotiation for funding.

There were two out of three donor agencies that took a hard stand against NGOs applying for funds. One of the regional peace coordinators of a funding NGO put it bluntly:

> *"This is US government money, so the first thing you have to know is that you have to take into account the US interest. Your interest is secondary, whatsoever – you have to fit your rigidity into the US interests. It's a kind of government that doesn't want embarrassment. We have had certain exceptions or a few cases such as in the time of Bush – funding organizations that promoted abortion or homosexuality, which Obama has reversed."* (INGO-PC46, 25/02/10).

The attitude of the above participant indicated that there was limited dialogue between the donor agency and recipient organization. In other words, the project was tailored towards the primary interest of the funding agency. Such funding conditions drove some NGOs to adjust their programme activities in order to access funding from the donors, hence undermining the response to

the real needs on the ground. The above participant's statement highlighted the overt and covert power relations that existed within donor-recipient relations. These situations, though isolated, reflected the *external* influence on NGO peacebuilding by the donor agencies.

In a further discussion, I interrogated the above participant on what he meant by 'US interest' and he clarified that this referred to the US commitment to peace and stability in Eastern Africa. Hence, the US support for peace and reconciliation activities was geared towards achieving this objective. In fact, the above US organization was supporting programmes on culturally-based reconciliation activities; local leadership formation and institutional strengthening of the cultural institution. The regional coordinator for these programmes was a man from northern Uganda who knew the area very well and spoke the local language. This was an added value to the organization because my interviews with this regional coordinator revealed the he had a good understanding of the northern Uganda context and had previous experience of working with the local organizations. Thus, one notes, on the one hand, that it would appear as though the US interests were totally disengaged from the local reality whereas on the other, there were indications that they worked with the local community in responding to the needs for culturally-based reconciliation process. However, the power relations were still in play.

I also interviewed a senior advisor to the US government based in Uganda. The participant was linked to the above organization and underscored the fact that

the US government, through the funding of organizations, was always interested in consulting the host governments and local community on the best way to end the Uganda conflict. He further said that there are policy makers, like himself, who have worked in humanitarian settings and understand the fact that funding interests have to be reasonably negotiated within the broader framework of local imperatives. He thus stated that:

> *"People who work for NGOs sometimes get into governments and can internally influence the policies. For example, the "Resolve Uganda"*[69] *initiative was started by individuals who had worked or done their research in Uganda and felt the need to be part of the wider campaign for change in Uganda"* (INGO-PC49, interviewed 14/01/10).

The argument advanced by this participant demonstrates that it is important to understand the underlying factors and interactions that develop in the process of negotiation of interests which could be perceived as promoting liberal peace. The fact of working closely with the community showed recognition of the local potential. The challenge however lay in how these relationships worked though the power imbalances and determined the peacebuilding discourse and practice. In addressing the question of sensitivity to local power dynamics in peacebuilding, the above participant reiterated that:

> *"Our primary interest is to support peace initiatives in the region. We do not impose our agenda, we dialogue with our partners. However, leadership is a value that we ought to maintain, and the US has played this role over the years. For example, we have funded local organizations like ARLPI, Ker Kwaro Acholi, North Uganda Transitional Initiative (NUTI), Amnesty Commission, and trained peace negotiators for the LRA-GOU peace talks..."* (INGO-PC49, interviewed 14/01/10)

This participant was emphatic that the US interests should not be interpreted narrowly. The primary concern is peace in Uganda and the US contribution is

[69] According to the official website, Resolve Uganda "works with activists, policy experts, and civil society leaders to identify and build support for policy measures that can help end LRA atrocities and enable affected families and communities to survive and rebuild their lives" (http://www.theresolve.org/who-we-are cited 12/12/10)

one among many others. However, the participant's reference to the US taking the *leadership* role insinuated a power-play where the most powerful shouts loudest. The leadership role, if not well managed can lead to tensions between the donor agency and local community.

Fourteen out of twenty seven NGO participants confirmed that, over the years, consultations between the donors and NGOs had improved. These informants however acknowledged that negotiating through different levels of tensions between the needs on the ground and the demands of the donors was not an easy task. In the end, funding negotiations paid off. For example, one of the programme coordinators from an international funding agency observed that four funding agencies supported cultural approaches to reconciliation (INGO-PO47, interviewed 11/02/10). This emerged from the dialogue between the donor agencies, NGOs concerned and the community. Such a process developed what I can call the *dialogical discourse between zones of power*. This implies establishing dialogue between, on the one hand, the NGO leverage in the contextual experience, and on the other, the donor's control of the funds.

It would thus be inaccurate to entirely dismiss the donor-NGO relations as hegemonic in favour of the donors. It is important to analyze the embedded interactive processes of dialogue, discussions and negotiations that influence the construction of peacebuilding discourse and practice.

Negotiated Agreement

This second approach to funding was based on continuous negotiation between the NGOs and donor agencies. Six NGO participants reported that some of their donors had revised the principles of cooperation with their beneficiaries, and were now more receptive to negotiating terms of funding. There was therefore a general recognition that dialogue and participation were critical to the success of any funded projects in the post-conflict setting. A programme coordinator from a funding agency confirmed that:

> *"Our approach has been to work with the partners, so ideas come from partners then to our organization, after which we negotiate and discuss with our partners. If it is something we are interested in – we would not say 'we have this money for this, can you write a proposal.' No, we let the organizations come up with their ideas, describe their needs then we see if we can fund the project. It is the partner who is on the ground, not us. So we rely on these partners to identify what is important for them"* (INGO-PO004, interviewed 22/01/10).

This donor's recognition of the NGO knowledge on the ground increased the level of dialogue and understanding. Thus, rather than constructing a peacebuilding concept that NGOs had to fit themselves into, as in the case of liberal peace, the donor agency above expected the interested NGOs to conceptualize their own peacebuilding approach and response strategy. In this way the peacebuilding initiative was based on the needs arising from the local experiences, hence engendering a negotiated partnership.

Dialogical Partnership

Dialogical partnership was mainly reached through *cooperative agreement*. One of the programme coordinators from a funding NGO put it simply:

> *"When we make a 'call for proposal' the contracted NGO implements our idea, but when we partner with an NGO in a 'cooperative agreement' then the respective NGO give us their ideas, we discuss them, agree on the common standards and principles, we give them the money- the NGO implements the project in their own style - We only maintain minimum rights of approval"* (LNGO-PO46, interviewed 25/02/10).

This flexible approach gives leverage to the implementing NGO to negotiate the project implementation process. Partnership emphasized the mutual relationships between the donors and NGOs, and subsequently between the two and the community; a shared level of understanding between the donors, NGOs and community; a desire to work together in a joint enterprise.

The above observations demonstrate how the use of the term 'partnership' denoted a shift in the conceptualization of donor-NGO-community relationship: the donor was not simply viewed as the giver or provider of funds, nor the NGO simply an implementer, and the community a recipient – they had all come together in a relational construction of a new reality of peace. The interactive dialogue between them aimed at addressing the contextual demands and challenges, hence ensuring that peace programmes responded to the needs on the ground. Partnerships also enhanced dialogue and understanding between NGOs and donors. Another observation is that partnership was enhanced in situations where donor agencies jointly run peacebuilding activities with their partners rather than simply subcontracting the latter. This approach exposed the donor agencies to the real situation on the ground and increased interaction between them.

Partnership was also used to denote networking across organizations. An informant from the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA) confirmed that as a means of resolving incongruent approaches to funding, and competitive attitude in programme activities, they regularly met with different organizations to prioritize activities and funding strategies:

> *"We regularly meet to coordinate our activities in the field. We also meet with different representatives of the organizations working in the field in order to set funding priorities for the different activities. Once we are clear which activities need priority funding we categorize them and publish them for a funding appeal. For example, in the 2010 'Consolidated Appeal for Northern Uganda' the major priority for funding was 'food security and agricultural livelihoods' because the majority of the population was returning home for resettlement"* (INGO-PO56, 12/04/10).

The above approach transformed power relations between NGOs; between NGOs and donors; and between NGOs and the community. The power relations developed into arenas of dialogue, mutual understanding and relational inter-subjective encounters with the reality of conflict and peacebuilding strategies. The common funding strategy improved the relationships between different NGOs, reduced competition and developed a fusion of different perspectives in peacebuilding. The meetings became a place for re-conceptualisation of funding strategies, and development of a common understanding of peacebuilding in response to contextual challenges. This approach gave the NGOs more leverage in negotiating with the donors as a block, hence exerting pressure for a more dialogical approach to funding. The community played an important role in the design and implementation of peacebuilding discourse and practice. In other words, NGO peacebuilding was *informed by the contextual reality.*

NGO respondents also confirmed that the networking and coordination meetings strategically developed into a transitional space for the exploration of common actions for response to social challenges. This approach influenced the peacebuilding discourse and practice by developing an interpretive perspective to analyzing and understanding the reality of conflict and possible responses. This was evidenced by the fact that NGOs exchanged ideas on their peacebuilding practices during the networking meetings, evaluated these approaches and formed new alliances in responding to social challenges. Besides, the interaction in the coordination meetings developed a common language that was consistent with the persuasive discourse of peacebuilding and its implementation process.

NGO informants who had received money through negotiated partnership appreciated the various levels of consultation, mutual understanding and commitment to genuine peace for the region. The process of conceptualization of the project and implementation was based on mutual dialogue. The research shows that in the process of implementation the partners (NGOs and donors) were in constant communication through exchange and discussions on project impact assessments as well as development of new proposals based on the changing contextual dynamics.

Seven NGO participants expressed satisfaction that they had room for negotiation in the implementation of the projects, as this informant observed:

> *"The donors come with their own music, but you have a choice not dance to it. We often feel the donor pressure, but after working with many donor agencies over the years, we can now make our stand known, and in some cases we have refused donor money that comes with stringent conditions. We have learned to negotiate with the donors – but you also have to understand that donors are equally often under pressure to disburse their funds to credible guys, so we know that"* (LNGO-PO45, interviewed 12/01/10).

This participant's perspective can be interpreted as emphasizing the importance of learning from dialogue and exchanges within daily experiences. Eight NGO participants were emphatic that constant negotiations with their funding agencies had increased dialogue, mutual consultation and respect between them and their donors. The building of trust strengthened relationships over the years.

Hence, contrary to the assumptions of the critics of liberal peace, different channels of dialogue improved relationships between the NGOs and donors. The relationships and conversations between the two generated a process of institutionalization of standards and approaches to funding negotiation as well as implementation of peacebuilding activities.

Part II: Middle Range Leadership: Networking and Social Action

In the middle range leadership NGOs liaised their experiences at the grassroots level with the advocacy initiatives at the top level leadership. NGOs generally used five different strategies in relational constructionism as a means of conflict intervention. These approaches were *relational* and as such founded on principles of relational constructionism such as mutual encounter and recognition, dialogical conversations, persuasive language, co-construction of

new understandings and realities, and interactive sense-making. The NGOs applied the following five strategies: First, through international awareness-raising in order to expose the level of violence in the northern Uganda conflict, subsequently putting pressure on the Ugandan government to be assertive to the peace process; second, through direct engagement with the government authorities particularly in raising concerns about human rights abuses; third, engaging with the LRA leaders to participate in peacebuilding process; fourth, involving the community in policy formulation; and fifth, addressing the challenge of the ICC intervention and transitional justice and linking this with community perceptions and expectations.

The first strategy was undertaken through ***international awareness*** campaigns which brought the Ugandan conflict to the attention of public media. There was a general appreciation, from both the local community and NGO participants that the presence of NGOs had contributed immensely to putting the northern Uganda conflict on the world map. One of the active NGO participants networking for advocacy posited very succinctly:

> *"Civil society, including NGOs, organized advocacy tours all over the world, especially in the UK and US. We allied with NGOs in other countries; used politics to make inroads in decision making processes; and lobbied embassies, in some cases, against their own governments. We contacted foreign development arms of different countries. We supported other structures such as religious leaders, conducted public actions such as the Gulu Walk[70]; Annual Peace Week[71]. Civil society also conducted community based training. These activities raised awareness on the need for peace in northern Uganda"* (LNGO-PC31, interviewed 18/01/10).

[70] Gulu Walk is an annual event in Gulu and other parts of the world that is used by human rights activists to raise awareness about the atrocities of the LRA-GOU conflict, and to call for national and international support for initiatives for peace and reconciliation.

[71] Annual Peace Week was an annual event that brought together different religious leaders and peace agents to raise awareness on the need for peace and reconciliation.

Archbishop Odama asserted that he had been to different parts of the world including the UN Security Council to lobby for a more concerted effort towards peace in northern Uganda (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10). Other religious and civil society leaders did the same. Eleven NGO participants (six international and five local), affirmed that different countries, agencies and associations worldwide were very supportive of the middle range leadership interventions in the conflict, and as a result pressure mounted on the Uganda government to commit itself to the peace process.

A participant from the Atiak control population observed that, despite the absence of NGOs in the area, there was generally a positive appreciation of the NGOs:

> "*Since the LRA attack on Atiak, when more than 250 people were killed, we have struggled to pull things together. This place was abandoned for many years. We felt that the government never really cared about us. It is the continuous lobbying of the NGOs that has brought us peace"* (CM-A68, interviewed17/02/10).

There was constant internal consultation amongst the NGOs in northern Uganda, as well as a show of solidarity between these NGOs and others in Europe and USA. Sadly though, as one NGO peace coordinator observed, there was no evidence of similar show of solidarity within Uganda (INGO-PC31, interviewed 18/01/10). The ethnic polarization had played into the social processes of change. As a result many people in southern Uganda ignored or were oblivious to the plight of the people in the North. The government was also viewed with suspicion in the North for failing to expeditiously bring the war to an end. This perception was generally shared by the majority of the participants interviewed. A local resident in Gulu wondered: "If the Uganda

government could send its army to fight in Rwanda, Congo and now Somalia, why couldn't they stop this war? There was an obvious complacency in their failure to end the war" (CM-G69, interviewed10/03/10).

The second strategy was through ***direct engagement with the government authorities***. A participant from one of the human rights organization narrated how they had often raised issues of human rights abuse with the government (LNGO-PO33, interviewed 22/03/10). These abuses mainly included beatings, harassment and extortion of civilians by the military. The NGO talked to the commander in-charge and also contacted the headquarters in Kampala. Four out of twenty NGOs trained the military on civilian rights and minimum use of force. The other NGOs, as I have explained above, were involved in diverse community peacebuilding activities such as mediation, reconciliation and IGA activities.

The training and workshops were sometimes mixed (civilians and military) thus facilitating dialogue between the two sectors. NGOs also invited government representatives from the district to participate in the NGO coordination meetings as a way of expanding the dialogue between the two sectors. These situations of mutual conversations improved relations between the NGOs, civilians, government and community. They also created opportunities to work together for a social change. However, in situations where the government had been accused of human rights abuses by the NGOs, there were tensions between the two (NGO and government officials), as I have explained in Chapter Five. Eventually the tension turned out to be positive because, according to four NGO

participants, there were reduced cases of human rights abuse and improved understanding and collaboration between the government and NGOs.

The third strategy involved ***engaging with the LRA leaders*** in advocating for peace. This was a daunting task and only one local NGO reported how they had been actively engaged in negotiating for peace between the rebels and the government. Archbishop Odama, the leader of the Acholi Religious Leaders for Peace Initiative (ARLPI), asserted that his organization risked the lives of their members in lobbying the rebel leaders. In narrating the encounter with the rebels, the archbishop said:

> *"I remember the first time we met the rebels, it was on 14th of July 2002, and this was in a place known as Otichi in the mountains of Kilak. We met Vincent Otti (the second in command to Kony) with the high ranking officers of the LRA. From this first meeting, we became peace emissaries between the rebels and the government. We called ourselves 'a bridge'. We would take messages between the LRA and government. We avoided any interpretation since we realized our task was very delicate, and also that as peace emissaries we should never interpret the mind of the other. We always asked them to write down the message. Yes, always – we went with a pen and paper to the rebels and asked them to write their message to the president, and in the same way we would ask the president to write his message"* (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10).

This approach to bridging different discourses and conversations was vital to constructing perceptions of peace between the rebels and the government. Through ARLPI the two opponents began to talk. From relational constructionism viewpoint ARLPI were active participants in a coordinated process of reality re-construction despite their emissary role. They were not only engaged in taking messages between the two parties, they also persuaded them to talk. The ARLPI put emphasis on facilitating conversations on peace. In his persuasive appeal to the rebels, Archbishop Odama explains how they

(ARLPI delegates) applied relational empathy in bringing the rebels to the negotiation table:

> *"We arrived at the location of the rebels in the bush around 4pm. They welcomed us, but sat at a distance from us. The most interesting thing is that there were no chairs there, only logs, and the distance between us was about two meters. I took the initiative to tell them that before we start we should pray, and Vincent Otti said 'you start' - we prayed, then we introduced ourselves and we started the conversation. I said, 'we have come here because the two of you are like elephants fighting, and you are stepping on the grass.*[72] *And the grass is suffering. So we have come here to tell you the voice of the grass - who are in the camp, who have nothing, they have lost their education, they have lost their lives, and become very poor. And they are all miserable. So they are asking you - can't you talk peace with the government because this war has dragged for too long, more than ten years, you have not finished it and we don't know when it would finish. We have come here to seek your own opinion and stand about this'"* (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10).

This form of persuasive speech aimed at pricking the conscience of the rebels by relating the experiences of the victims of conflict. The approach became a valuable technique in mediation. In the process of conversations, the religious mediators engaged the rebels in a mediatory discourse that clarified the rebels' position and options for peace. Archbishop Odama narrates how after their (ARLPI delegates) persuasive speech, the LRA second in command, Vincent Otti, agreed to a conditional peace dialogue. Odama said:

> *"I remember Otti saying that 'you people are from the government and you have come here simply to inspect us and know where we are so that you can go and tell the government who will in turn come and finish us.' We just stayed there listening, some of us wanted to reply but I told them to wait. I told them that 'we are not here to speak for the government but for the people because they are suffering in your hands, you are mistreating them, and sometimes suffering in the hands of the government forces when they refuse to reveal to the government forces where you are hiding. So please our interest is not to side with the government or LRA, but to ask you to talk.' Then some of them begun to argue with us - but we insisted 'we have come to seek for dialogue.' Then in the end Otti said as long as the government is willing to talk with us we shall talk, if they want to fight, we shall fight. We tried to dissuade him from fighting"* (Archbishop Odama, interviewed 19/01/10).

[72] Odama is making reference to a common proverb in most parts of Africa: "When two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers." In this case the 'two elephants' referred to the LRA and GOU, while the 'grass' to the general population of northern Uganda.

The ARLPI realized, in the conversations above, that they had to win the trust of the rebels in order to effectively carry out their mediation responsibility. Through persuasion they managed to get the rebels to accept their (ARLPI) emissary role. The two sides worked on trust-building in order to mutually accept each other. Archbishop Odama admitted that it took them quite some time to win the trust the LRA and convince them that the main interest of ARLPI was to mediate the reality of the suffering masses on the ground by bringing the two opponents to a negotiation table. The process of inter-subjective encounters improved mutual recognition, from suspicion and fear, to understanding and accommodation. Thus, conversations, dialogue and consultations became crucial values in the construction of a new reality of peace based on relationship building exercises. A programme officer from a local NGO reiterated that:

> *"Peace processes are never uni-lineal like a marathon race, they are fragmented. There could be cases where the opponents are talking and in some cases one of the parties pulls out. So peace conversations are not necessarily peaceful conversations. The most important thing is that the opponents are talking. The problem is when they don't talk. As long as the channels of communication are open, then the process is on"* (LNGO45-PO45, interviewed 12/01/10).

This analysis confirms that while in most cases peace processes are fragmented, the fact that parties in conflict are talking is much more important. In relational constructionism conversation are important in bridging differences and creating a common space for interaction. Similarly, peace conversations create opportunities for perceiving the objective reality of conflict from different perspectives represented by the parties in dialogue. The NGOs played the role of *facilitators* in conversations ensuring that the momentum for participation in peace activities intensified. In Atiak, the government and cultural leaders played a similar role by mobilizing the community to dialogue about the various social challenges they were confronted with.

The fourth strategy was ***policy formulation*** through community engagement. This was carried out by creating avenues for dialogue in the community and subsequently influencing government policies on reconciliation and education. One of the participants from a local NGO conducted a nationwide research on the local people's perception on transitional justice (LNGO-PO45, interviewed 12/01/10). The research was mainly conducted in regions of northern and eastern Uganda which have known many years of conflict. The perceptions from the findings informed the formulation of the National Reconciliation Bill 2009. The participant further elaborated that:

> "*At my organization we seek to infuse the stuff we do into policy alternatives that could help the government in its own work. For example, we came up with practical propositions for a National Reconciliation Bill that addresses the transitional justice issues of Agenda 3*[73]*. We have used the documents for grassroots training which were focused on transitional justice. We have worked around that document with parliamentarians, the executive and judiciary. And since actualizing the most important aspects of Agenda 3 fall on the judiciary, we have passed it on to the Judiciary as a Transitional Justice Working Document. In the document, we made some proposals for reparations based on the national research that we had conducted*" (LNGO-PO45, interviewed 12/01/10).

The above approach links social research, conversations with the people and policy formulation. Understanding how people comprehend and interpret their reality, their major grievances, and expectations on how to construct a new future, were critical in creating meaningful conversations for change. These kinds of conversations that lead to social actions are important aspects in relational constructionism. The fact of bringing experiences of the population into policy formulation broadened the level of dialogue and increased

[73] Agenda 3 refers to the Juba Peace Talks that I have explained about in Chapter Four and in the Appendix. The agenda, known as *Accountability and Reconciliation,* focused mainly on addressing human rights violations during the different periods of the conflict in Uganda.

participation in governance structure. The main desire of the people was related to transitional justice concerns and how they could be part of constructing a different future.

The fifth strategy referred to ***addressing the challenge of the ICC intervention and transitional justice.*** Thirteen NGO participants (8 local and 5 international) reported that they had lobbied against the ICC intervention because it would derail the peace process. These participants were concerned that the LRA rebel leaders could refuse participating in the peace process because of the ICC arrest warrants. However, five NGO participants (three international and two local) were of the opinion that it was important to convict the LRA in order to bring an end to the culture of impunity. I have discussed the diversity of opinions in Chapter Five.

As a strategy, NGOs undertook extensive community dialogue on how to deal with the past atrocities. Archbishop Odama observed that his organization (ARLPI) made a visit to the ICC in The Hague and appealed for the withdrawal of arrest warrants in order to give peace a chance, but the ICC did not change their position. The ARLPI leaders and several other NGOs thus, put emphasis on dialogue and mutual understanding as a means of achieving a more sustainable peace. From a relational constructionism perspective the debate on how to deal with perpetrators created an opportunity for conversation and dialogue on the way forward.

Part III: Grassroots Leadership Level

Peacebuilding Communities and Relationship Building for Social Change

The different levels of interaction between peacebuilding agents in the community developed what I may call *peacebuilding communities* in both Gulu and Atiak. In these communities there were different levels of interaction: In Gulu, NGOs interacted amongst themselves; NGOs and local community worked together for peace; and different peace agents such as the paralegals, peace coordinators, and peace groups liaised with each other for common peace activities. The inter-group and inter-subjective encounters generated mutual sense-making, negotiations of different approaches and understanding of social reality with the aim of finding agreeable solutions to the contextual challenges.

At the grassroots level in Atiak the various agents of peace worked closely together in addressing the challenges of peace and conflict. For example, the council of elders met regularly to discuss issues of concern and the challenges they were facing, as this elder observed: “we have our meetings as elders once a month to look at the various issues facing our community. We try to do what we can and we know that the people respect what we do” (CM-A61, interviewed 14/03/10). In an informal interview with two residents in Atiak I learned that the elders often consulted with the local government leaders before they took a major decision. The two participants observed that this was important in ensuring that decisions in land dispute resolution, reconciliation or reintegration of the formerly abducted persons were carried out in harmony. Hence, relational

constructionism in peacebuilding was strongly experienced at the grassroots level in Atiak.

There were four predominant strategies that NGOs and communities in Gulu and Atiak applied in developing peacebuilding communities. These strategies were more pronounced when applied by the NGOs and local community in Gulu than Atiak with its limited resources. First, the use of *relationship building* as a means of strengthening the activities of peacebuilding communities*;* second, encouragement of *inter-subjective and group encounters in peacebuilding* as a means of creating opportunities for mutual recognition, dialogical conversations and interactive sense-making; third, efforts towards *community mobilization and networking* in order to increase the constituency of peace practitioners, subsequently influencing peacebuilding discourse and practice; and fourth, the development of *relational leadership* as a means of sustaining peacebuilding initiatives.

Relationship Building

I have already indicated that relationship building emerged both within the process of carrying out peacebuilding activities, and as a result of peace intervention. On the one hand, networking and joint enterprise approaches undertaken by NGOs meant that peace agents built relationships among themselves. In Atiak community peace agents networked among themselves in response to peacebuilding challenges. The subsequent result of relationship building between the peace agents was that they were able to develop a

relational practice based on lessons learned, exchange of ideas, conversations and dialogues. On the other hand, peace interventions focused on improving relationships between parties in conflict and among communities dealing with different post-conflict challenges. Peace interventions produced communities of peacebuilding, which in relational constructionism are referred to as communities of practice. This interactive process of relationship building was therefore based on encounters for social change.

The communities in Atiak and Gulu, as well as the NGOs, accentuated relationship building in most of their peacebuilding activities. This strategy developed and strengthened communities of peacebuilding. Sixteen participants from both Gulu and Atiak expressed the opinion that in order to initiate and strengthen peacebuilding communities they were constantly involved in facilitating relationships within and between peacebuilding communities. A peace coordinator of an international NGO, in discussing repercussions of conflict on society, elaborated succinctly that:

> *"One of the primary casualties of conflict is relationship. When conflict occurs it breaks relationship, the family system, clan system and social support networks collapse; the relationship with the environment collapses, relationship with institutions collapses. In conflict people cease to trust the government, the law, judicial systems, and leadership. So what you need to do in post-conflict contexts is to reconstruct the relationship with people, institution, and all those things that affect people's lives. This will give you a basis upon which people can begin to move on"* (INGO-PO45, interviewed 25/02/10).

The above participant's analysis points to the fact that conflict can sever relations at four different levels: between individuals; between individuals and communities; between community and the environment; and between community, leadership and institutional structures of governance. The

participant reiterated that peace interventions have to consider relationship building as key to the success of such interventions. This strategy was evident in the approaches taken by most NGOs.

A local peacebuilding coordinator expressed how her organization has been active in building relationships between different ethnic groups:

> *"We do cross-border peacebuilding to improve relations between neighbours. You see, the Acholi as an ethnic group was isolated, even before the LRA case. We had issues with all our neighbours, the Iteso, West Nile, in Southern Sudan – they were all saying you people send your sons to kill us... There have been tensions between the Acholi and Karamojong, especially in the Pader region. The main problem is cattle rustling - The Karamojong often attack the Acholi and take their animals. This has led to tensions and conflict between the two communities. We have therefore initiated cross-border dialogues to improve the relationships in these communities"* (LNGO-PO40, interviewed 20/01/10).

Relationship building thus became the core of peacebuilding activities in both Gulu and Atiak. This was undertaken, as I have noted in Chapter Five, through creating transitional spaces such as workshops, ritual performances, mediation, awareness-raising, and institution of a culture of peace. These interactive experiences generated peacebuilding communities committed to changing the society towards mutual understanding, reconciliation and peace. Dr. Okumu stressed that reconciliation rituals brought people together to bridge their differences and create new friendships:

> *"Reconciliation is about coming together to solve a common problem. This coming together is considered sacred according to the Acholi people, in the sense that once you have been reconciled you become a friendly people and everything you do expresses friendship and love and excludes hate, jealousy and whatever. This is in the backbone of the reconciliation process"* (CM-G28, interviewed 03/03/10)

The concept of 'coming together' as explained by this participant creates an opportunity for rebuilding broken relationships. In Atiak two community leaders

observed in an informal interview that the community was committed to reconciling different families. Reconciliation created a space for mutual acceptance and trust building. Lederach (1999:27) observes that reconciliation "envisions protracted conflict as a system and focuses its attention on relationships within that system." The system is complex and has different levels of interactions between social agents. In other words, it is important to understand the fact that the problems that the community faces are inter-connected within different systems and networks in the society.

Inter-subjective and Group Encounters in Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding activities created opportunities for inter-subjective and group encounters as a means of developing communities of peacebuilding in both Atiak and Gulu. The strong community ties in the Acholi community meant that inter-subjectivity could not be interpreted in a western individualistic perspective as I have explained in Chapter Three. Relational constructionism acquired a different characterization as far as inter-subjectivity was concerned. As I have explained in Chapter Four and Five, individuals were not entirely viewed as single entities. They were conceptualized within a relational framework, which meant in association with their families, clans and ethnic group identifications. Hence, inter-subjective encounters were embedded within these communitarian characterizations.

In both Gulu and Atiak, community participants' comments to me highlighted the ways in which diverse inter-subjective encounters opened up new horizons where different parties found a common space for dialogue and reconstruction

of a new reality. This was evident from some of the narrations on reconciliation which explained how the coming together of the affected families and clans was preceded by elaborate negotiation meetings. One of the community participants in Gulu was emphatic that preparing the people for dialogue and reconciliation was important in realizing the fruits of reconciliation (CM-G16, interviewed 10/03/10). The participant underlined that the preparations were particularly vital in situations where the families of the victim and that of the perpetrator were to meet in a *mato oput* process. She added in one incident the emotions were high before, during and after the *mato oput* process. The families needed adequate preparation on what the process of reconciliation entailed, the challenge of meeting with the perpetrator or victim and the community's desire for peace. An elder from Atiak observed that the *mato oput* process was hardly practiced because the community was not ready for it and it was far too expensive for most families (CM-A61, interviewed 14/03/10). Many families could neither afford a sheep nor the payment for compensation which were both required by the ritual.

Two peace coordinators from local NGOs affirmed that offering opportunities for dialogical conversations between people in conflict helped in changing negative attitudes and perceptions into mutual understanding within the community. A peacebuilding coordinator of a local NGO narrated how the promotion of dialogue and understanding diminished levels of animosity and inter-subjective differences in land disputes:

> *"Initially there was a problem – a lot of tension between people involved in land boundary disputes. So we initiated dialogue meetings, provided free legal aid with the hope that most people would opt for dialogue, which would normally lead to a win-win situation. After a lot of campaigning and awareness raising,*

the majority of the people opted for the dialogue. However, some cases had to be decided by the court of law. We feel that we somehow succeeded in promoting reconciliation through dialogue and later the use of the Acholi rituals" (LNGO-PO32, interviewed 25/01/10).

The above narration demonstrates how inter-subjective encounters were characterized by community persuasions on individuals, families and clans to embrace a peace culture. To some extent the pursuit of community harmony took precedence over individual positions, even though as I have discussed in Chapter Five, the individual was expected to show remorse and commit him/herself to the agreed resolution.

The above discussion shows how conversational dialogue was applied as a vital strategy in facilitating inter-subjective relationships and developing communities of peacebuilding. The process of interactive sense-making was evidenced by the different dialogical encounters between parties in conflict. These encounters aimed at propagating a peace culture as an alternative to the culture of violence, especially among the youth. Reconciliation rituals facilitated the bonding of relationships which were ritualized to become fundamental means of transforming broken relationships and beginning life anew. From the viewpoint of relational constructionism, dialogue and rituals provided a transitional space where different parties could express their desires, seek healing and reconcile with each other. In other words, reconciliation provided new opportunities for the community to begin again and re-construct a different reality.

Community Mobilization and Networking

Community mobilization as a strategy for relationship building and commitment to peace increased the peace constituency and interaction between the peacebuilders. For example, the ARLPI mobilized the population to be aware of the need for peace and reconciliation. The organization rallied different religious leaders and came up with an idea of holding an Annual Peace Week for the northern region. Archbishop Odama narrated that:

> *"In 2006 January, we started provincial peace week which we referred to as GANAL - **G**ulu **A**rchdiocese-**N**ebbi Diocese-**A**rua Diocese-**L**ira Diocese. Within this acronym we also have our mission: **G**row **A**ll **N**ew **A**live in **L**ove. You see the war had distorted us; we had broken into small pieces within our regions and nation at large, so when this started I felt that my role was to unite all these dioceses and the people that live in them. Then I realized we are not only Catholics, other religions, churches, cultural leaders are also there and we need to include them. Our peace weeks have become special days of expressing our commitment to peace"* (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10).

The Annual Peace Week had become a great cultural experience where different people came to talk about peace and express their concerns. The involvement of diverse groups (religious, cultural and political leaders) had meant that a variety of discourses for peace were brought together in a common space for dialogue and exchange.

A representative of a government human rights organization confirmed that her organization had been active in raising awareness about civic engagement of civilians by training the populations about their democratic responsibilities such as, participation in the 2011 general elections[74], human rights awareness and the importance of maintaining sustainable environment (UG-PO007, interviewed 18/02/10). The general appreciation from the majority (7 out of 9) of the

[74] This is in reference to General Elections held in Uganda in February 2011.

community participants in Gulu was that training provided them with a common space for dialogue and exchange on fundamental rights and responsibilities as citizens. These also presented opportunities for citizens to engage in conversations with government officials as well as raise their concerns about different arms of government.

Community mobilization for peace was also experienced in campaigns against environmental degradation. A community resident from Gulu asserted that a threat to the environment was a threat to commonly shared resources and if not well managed could lead to conflict (CM-G67, interviewed 10/05/10). The interviews further showed that consciousness of communal inter-dependence and connectedness was crucial to sustainability of peace.

However, in Atiak community mobilization for peace was not as successful as in Gulu where NGOs had put in resources and logistical facilities to reach out to people in different villages. It was common for NGOs in Gulu to provide bicycles for their peace agents. In contrast, in Atiak peace agents could not afford bicycles to cover the distances between villages. Besides, in some cases there was a general apathy for peacebuilding activities in Atiak. In my informal interviews with a religious leader and a community member, it was evident that the people preferred activities that would bring them some income. For example, one of the LC3 leaders pointed out that the youth were less interested in participating in peacebuilding activities (LC3-A39, interviewed 22/02/10). He spearheaded a campaign to get the youth to participate in community

peacebuilding events and after five months he noticed some positive changes. More youth began to participate in peace programmes.

From a relational constructionism perspective, awareness raising leads to a co-construction of a shared reality. The process of mutual influencing develops what Gadamer (1976) refers to as a fusion of horizon, which I have explained in Chapter Three. The fusion of horizons does not simply occur, it has to be undertaken through an interactive process. Hence, as a strategy to community mobilization and empowerment NGOs used workshops which became transitional spaces for bringing together different participants to dialogue on possible solutions to challenges facing the community. This meant that workshops created an opportunity for the testing of ideas and how they could be applied in real life.

Workshops provided a transitional space for relationship building and dreaming of a different future. The dream of the envisioned future became a fundamental source of motivation for the community peacebuilders. Twelve out of twenty seven NGO participants used story telling as a means of capturing the reality on the ground. For some participants story telling became a therapeutic experience, especially those that had experienced trauma from the conflict. In relational constructionism, storytelling can be interpreted as a medium of engagement with the reality of the story teller. Stories brought closer to the community the individual experiences. They developed into a shared repertoire of different experiences which became important in deliberating ways of responding to the social challenges highlighted in the stories.

A peace coordinator of an international NGO affirmed that: “We use role plays to enact our daily lives and seek solutions to the emerging challenges. The workshops offer us an opportunity to imagine a new future - a peaceful society” (INGO-PO34, interviewed 10/02/10). A community participant from Gulu affirmed that: “workshops have provided me with a wonderful place to meet people and make friends. I didn’t know people here since my family was displaced when I was 12, and now 15 years later I feel like I belong to a new family of peacebuilders” (CM-G62, interviewed 16/02/10). Workshops therefore provided a transitional space for interactive learning that eventually contributed to community mobilization for peace.

Relational Leadership

Relational leadership was at the centre of most peacebuilding activities both in Gulu and Atiak. As I have noted above, NGOs engaged communities and donors in building a culture of peace. It is therefore important to highlight the relational leadership feature that integrated peacebuilding activities in different sectors of the community. Relational leadership was mainly undertaken by institutional leaders such as local councilors, religious, cultural and political leaders both in Gulu and Atiak. There were also individuals who emerged as leaders based on their passion in addressing the social issues of concern. I have cited in Chapter Five the example of the parents association in Atiak that advocated against abuse of girls. In Gulu the religious leaders in ARLPI used their positions to mobilize the community towards a peace culture.

In relational constructionism, leadership is vital for the development of values, decision making processes and conflict resolution mechanisms. To a larger extent leadership was identified with its capacity to build relationships through: conflict mediation aimed at bridging broken relationships; administering of cultural rituals of reconciliation as a means of dealing with the wounds of the past; and establishment of a common code of conduct based on cultural, social, political and economic values. These activities contributed to social cohesion.

Relational leadership was based on: the value of leadership as 'connectors of peace'; characterization of leadership in relation to collective identity; depiction of leadership as charismatic initiatives of individual. The majority of the community participants (12 out of 16), both in Gulu and Atiak, asserted that leaders were expected to be *connectors of peace*. To enhance their capacity, NGOs trained the leaders in Gulu, as I have noted in Chapter Five. A programme officer from an international NGO referred to the leadership training as a process of building *local capacities for peace*[75] (INGO-PO34, interviewed 10/02/10). The expectation was that the leaders would become *connectors* of peace through their commitment to the promotion of values that generate mutual respect, understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation.

I found the idea of identifying the leaders as 'connectors' to be an important one in the analysis of how relational leadership became fundamental to social change processes within the community. The concept of 'connecting' should however not be simply understood as bridging relations. It should instead be

[75] This concept of 'local capacities for peace' is borrowed from Anderson (1999). ANDERSON, H. 1999. Collaborative Learning Communities. *In:* MCNAMEE, S. & GERGEN, K. J. (eds.) *Relational Responsibility: Resources for Sustainable Dialogue.* London: Sage Publications.

viewed as depicting the influential role of leadership in getting the communities to embrace a peace culture. Such a process is interactive in the sense that leaders are in constant conversation with the community in order to develop new attitudes, perceptions and approaches to social change.

Both cultural and local government leaders were elected and censored by the people. Government leaders worked closely with the cultural leaders in facilitating mediation processes between individuals, families and clans, especially on land disputes. However, there were a few cases where both categories of leaders were seen as inhibitors to social change, particularly those who demanded bribes for the services rendered. This raised the question of the importance of the ethics of leadership. In other words, credibility was a crucial value in relational leadership. I have noted in Chapter Five a case of a community participant who was hesitant to let his land dispute case be mediated by an elder who was obviously biased in his judgments. This meant that unethical leaders were not appreciated in the same way as ethical ones.

Cultural leaders were considered to be instrumental in facilitating harmonious co-existence between individuals, families and clans both in Gulu and Atiak. These leaders, as I have noted in Chapters Four and Five, performed important acts such as reconciliation and reintegration rituals. The symbolic interactionism behind reconciliation rituals was fundamental in bridging relationships. Cultural leaders ensured that the values behind symbolic rituals were respected and observed in order to safeguard the effects they (values) were meant to attain. A peace analyst from a local NGO observed that cultural

values were critical connectors to peace in all communities in Uganda. He underscored that:

> *"What we have seen nationally, based on the research carried out by my organization, is that there are some common values in each culture which may act as common principles to unite different communities. I can name three: first,* ***death*** *is not sanctioned in all cultures, and so there is no death penalty - which demonstrates the fact that the respect for life is paramount. Second is the respect for* ***Women*** *– In many cultures in Uganda you don't touch women during war. Women have always been protected in situations of war. For example, during the war in S. Sudan, women protected the men by sitting in front of the houses to prevent any of the armed rebels from accessing the men hidden in the house - they were never touched. The Kakwa people of northern Uganda had laws of war that protected women. Third is the protection of* ***children*** *– they are considered to be innocent, and among the Acholi they are as delicate as an egg"* (LNGO-P0005, interviewed 14/02/10).

The return to these connectors that had been weakened during the many years of the legacy of violence was emphasized by most NGO participants as a strategy of strengthening commitment to peace. The primary focus was to mobilize the community to return to the connectors based on commonly held values of peace and reconciliation. The majority of the participants had a high regard for the Acholi cultural values while acknowledging that they had been eroded over the years. These participants also expressed the concern that most people did not know the Acholi cultural values and that it would be important to encourage the communities to re-learn the values.

However, the participant's comment about the protection of women and children in war lacked evidence in the northern Uganda conflict. For example, a woman running a local NGO that takes care of formerly abducted women confirmed that the majority of her beneficiaries had been raped, physically abused and traumatized by the experiences of war (LNGO-PC73, interviewed 14/02/10). A human rights activist from a local NGO pointed out that they had documented

systematic abuse of women and children during the war (LNGO-PO33, interviewed 22/03/10).[76]

Relational leadership was characterized by *collective* identity. For example, leadership among women emerged as a positive source of social change. Unlike institutional leadership that was based on prescribed roles, women leadership was a result of the urgency for change and commitment to changing social perceptions. Women in both Gulu and Atiak were instrumental in engaging men to consider the needs of young women, especially young mothers and returnees from the LRA captivity. These women activists contributed to the deconstruction of perceptions that view women only as victims and not active agents for peace, hence masking their potential for conflict resolution. For example, in Gulu, women leaders involved in income generating activities (IGA) and girl education movement (GEM) were influential in mobilizing other women to be part of community peacebuilding activities. A woman from one of the IGA groups in Gulu asserted that: "It is our responsibility to change our society. We invite everyone, and we accept anyone who wants to join our group. It is not just a group for making money it is also a group for building peace together" (CM-G67, interviewed 10/05/10). In Atiak women took

[76] The documented violence against women by the human rights NGOs include: 1. HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS 2003. Film - Between Two Fires: Torture and displacement in northern Uganda. Gulu: Human Rights Focus. This is a documentary about torture of displaced persons living in the IDP camps in Acholiland; HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS. 2002a. Between Two Fires: The Human Rights Situation in Protected Camps in Gulu District. Available at: http://www.hurifo.org/Publications/Between%20Two%20Fires%20-%20Internet%20Version.pdf (Accessed 10 August 2010). This document explains how the persons in IDP camps were caught in the middle experiencing attacks from both the LRA and Government of Uganda. Other documentations depicting systematic abuses on girls and women are documented in: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 2003. Abducted and abused: Renewed conflict in northern Uganda. New York: Human Rights Watch; WORLD VISION 2004 Pawns of Politics: Children, Conflict and Peace in Northern Uganda. Washington: World Vision.

leadership in the parents' association that was instrumental in lobbying girls' rights.

Women whose daughters and sons had been abducted by the LRA or had been attacked during the conflict were much more vocal in campaigning for a culture of peace. These women emerged as community leaders who were well respected and appreciated in the society. Most of them became part of a lobby organization such as the Concerned Parents Association (CPA) and other human rights organizations. Relationship building and bonding at this level engendered a strong solidarity for peace. This phenomenon fits within the spectrum of social identity theory which asserts that leadership emerges based on "the degree to which a person fits with the identity of the group as a whole" (Northouse, 2007:5). The identity traits of women leaders were characterized by both the experiences of war and subsequent commitment to transform those experiences into life giving opportunities. This contributed immensely to the sustainability of the peacebuilding communities.

Relational leadership was also characterized by *individual* initiatives. Charismatic characteristics of individual leaders emerged as an influencing factor in organizational and community commitment to peace. A peace coordinator from a local NGO narrated how the national leader of her organization had been a source of influence and encouragement to her work for peace (LNGO-PO040, interviewed 20/01/10). She observed that: "His charismatic commitment to peace drove him to risk his life by talking to the

rebels in their hideouts." This leadership example depicts what Gerstbauer (2009:10) refers to as *agency leadership*, which means the capacity for an individual to influence his/her organization to maintain its core values while responding to the urgent needs of the society. These acts of commitment and conviction became a source of motivation, particularly for those who were apprehensive about commitment to peacebuilding.

Thus, peacebuilding at the top level leadership put emphasis on the embedded dialogical processes between the donors, NGOs and communities. The middle and grassroots levels of leadership put emphasis on relational leadership that sought to balance individual initiative with collective identity.

Conclusion

My primary objective in this chapter was to demonstrate how relational constructionism was at the core of the strategies applied by the NGOs, donors and communities in the various peacebuilding activities. I used Lederach's (1997) pyramid framework to demonstrate how different peace agents worked closely together within multiple levels of interactions at the top (NGO-donor relations), middle and grassroots (community) levels. NGOs operated at all levels and were crucial in relationship building *vertically*, between the decision makers and the community, and *horizontally* between the different sectors of the community. In Atiak, I have already described how the community mainly operated at the grassroots level through peacebuilding initiatives.

Unlike in Lederach's pyramid framework where NGOs operate at grassroots and middle level, this study has demonstrated that NGOs were active in all the three levels and played a very active role in connecting different peace agents. The three levels of conflict intervention (top, middle and grassroots leadership) emphasized relational constructionism through dialogue, conversation, relationship building, interactive sense-making and fusion of different horizons (attitudes, perception, values, positions and expectations) as a means of envisioning a new reality of peace. This process is *relational* because it results in co-construction of knowledge, new reality, perceptions, attitudes and desires for a different future.

In both Gulu and Atiak, community peacebuilding developed a *shared repertoire* that contributed to a common peacebuilding discourse and practice, and increased the number of peace agents in the community. In Gulu, NGOs worked with the local community, donors, governments, leaders and civil society in responding to the different peacebuilding challenges, and in the process generated a peacebuilding discourse and practice. In Atiak, the peace agents operated at the grassroots level and generally struggled to mobilize the community to participate in peacebuilding activities. Hence, in Atiak participation in peacebuilding activities was lower compared to Gulu that had a much higher number of participants. This, as I have stated above, was mainly attributed to the fact that NGOs had put in a lot of resources to support peace programmes in Gulu.

This study has revealed that it is important to examine the different strategies undertaken by both NGOs and donors in mutually influencing each other within a power-play that is facilitated by continuous conversations and dialogue. This dialogical process became important in relationship building and prioritization of contextual demands. NGOs, as I have discussed above, organized regular coordination and networking meetings in order to solidify their peacebuilding practice and develop a common strategy to dialoguing with the donors. On the other hand, donors developed principles of operation that were vital in creating spaces for dialogue, exchange and mutual respect between them and the beneficiaries. The mantra of the 'lessons learned' among NGOs and community peacebuilders showed that experiences of community peacebuilding contributed to the general discourse and practice of peacebuilding. However, it is important to note that in the category of 'constrained funding' NGOs responded to the demands of the donors which in some cases were not congruent to the needs on the ground.

Mutual appreciation through community mobilization, change of attitudes and perceptions contributed to relationship building and increased the peace dividend within the community. Communitarian approach to conflict resolution facilitated the different levels of dialogue within the community, between individual, families and clans. In both Gulu and Atiak community leaders cooperated with different peace agents in creating transitional spaces for dialogue through meetings, workshops, advocacy and reconciliation encounters.

In Gulu, these strategies led to interactive influences between the NGOs and donors; NGOs and local community; and local community amongst themselves. In Atiak the community leaders liaised with different group leaders (women, youth, religious) and government leaders in building a community spirit for peace. In both Gulu and Atiak peace agents engaged in mutual negotiations of different positions, as well as a common exploration of solutions to diverse challenges facing the society.

The common thread to the peacebuilding strategies between Gulu and Atiak was that they both relied on relationship building as a means to constructing a new reality of peace. The control population of Atiak demonstrated that with or without the presence of NGOs, peacebuilding was a *relational* process that required the presence of different agents. The fact that in both Gulu and Atiak there were community members who stood out as the 'critical yeast' for peacebuilding meant that these communities would be willing to continue with peacebuilding activities with or without the presence of NGOs. Hence, the liberal peace critique that peacebuilding is externally influenced ignores the contextual evidence of relational constructionism displayed in this chapter.

Chapter Seven: General Conclusion

The aim of this concluding chapter is to revisit the research question and draw together major conclusions which combine to answer the question. The main research question was: *To what extent is NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda informed by the local reality and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding?* This question focuses on understanding the relationship between NGOs, donors and local community in peacebuilding, and the resulting tensions between external liberal peace influences and local peacebuilding approaches in northern Uganda. Thus, in order to answer the research question I carried out research in three main phases. First was an analysis of the secondary data on NGOs, liberal peace and peacebuilding efforts in Uganda as a means of establishing the foundational background to the study. Second was the process of data collection that led to the investigation of NGOs, community, donor agencies, government and cultural leaders, as well as government institutions of peacebuilding. The representative samples were drawn from both Gulu and the control population of Atiak. The third was data analysis of the gathered information. I relied on grounded theory for the process of data collection and analysis. These three phases were iterative and contributed to the understanding of the practice and discourse of NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda.

In the first phase, I carried out secondary data analysis on NGO peacebuilding and Uganda conflict. I examined the claims of the liberal peace critics that NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts implements a western agenda of liberal

peace. My study of the Uganda conflict, based on the secondary data, gave me a broader view of the conflict. Before going to the field I concurred with most of the critiques of liberal peace. However, after my field experience I was much more enlightened to make a critical review of the liberal peace critique. Both sets of literature (on liberal peace critique and Uganda conflict) had a common characteristic: they made generalized assertions that overlooked the contextual complexities and at the same time failed to include the voices of the people on the ground.

The secondary data highlighted the major tenets of NGO peacebuilding and the claim of liberal peace critics that NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts implements a western agenda of liberal peace, and that this is intrinsically wrong. The liberal peace critics assert that liberal peace focuses on promoting democracy, human rights, economic liberalization and the rule of law (Paris, 1997; Sørensen, 2007; Richmond, 2010b). Liberal peace has also been conceived as part of state building within strategies of post-conflict reconstruction (Chandler, 2004; Heathershaw, 2008). Further liberal peace discourse has developed in the line of human security and responsibility to protect civilians from gross human rights violations (Bellamy, 2009; Chandler, 2004). These have raised questions on the effectiveness of humanitarian intervention, the moral justifications, assessment of its success and failures and the responsibility for global governance under international standards set by the UN (Jentleson, 2007; Ignatieff, 2003; Welsh, 2004; Chandler, 2009).

NGOs have therefore been viewed as continuing the liberal peace agenda through their peacebuilding and development programmes (Carey, 2010; Duffield, 2002; Chigas, 2007; Goodhand, 2006). The above literature holds that the overreliance by the NGOs on western donor funds for their operations has meant that NGOs have lacked the freedom to conduct their peacebuilding activities independently. These conditions have raised concerns about NGO legitimacy, the relevance of their peacebuilding activities to the local context and persistent tensions between internal and external mechanisms of peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2008; Lister, 2003; Linda Mayoux, 2005). This has led to suggestions for a hybrid form of peacebuilding that combines both the local and external approaches to peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2010; Brown et al., 2010; Richmond, 2010b).

The above liberal peace critiques tend to rely on anecdotal evidence without talking to the people on the ground to find out their own perceptions of the critiques being made. The critique has often been undertaken at a macro level while ignoring the interactive peacebuilding processes at the micro level and how these shape the discourse and practice of peacebuilding at the middle and top level structures of the society. Post-conflict contexts are complex and diverse and ought to be analyzed from a localized perspective with a clear understanding of the historical trajectories, major grievances, key agents of peace and conflict, internal and external dynamism of peacebuilding, and interactive encounters at the grassroots, middle and top level structures of the society. Besides, there are such diverse identity boundaries among NGOs, donors and local community that they cannot all be discussed as single entities.

In my analysis of the Uganda conflict, I have argued that the post-independence period in Uganda has been characterized by identity politics in competition for the national cake. Identity politics is based on the principle that identity, whether individual or collective, “would be central to both the vision and practice of radical politics” (Ryan, 2001:23). This view holds that political practice should fundamentally be focused on identity. Identity politics can be emancipatory through social movement groups that call for the rights of the marginalized, minorities or oppressed groups. However, it can also be alienating especially when it focuses on perpetuating the interests of a specific group at the expense of the rest of the population. The colonial and post independence Uganda enforced the second aspect of alienation of identities for the interest of those in power.

From a relational constructionism perspective, meaning resides in relationships. Thus, the fact that ethnic balkanization has been institutionalized in Uganda, both in the pre-colonial and post-independence periods, has meant that the co-construction of a common narrative of nation building, has been hampered. The divisive ethnic discourse has influenced the definition and understanding of the state, power and governance. The state is privatized by a few individuals who favour their ethnic groups and impose their power on the rest of the nation. The LRA and the rest of the population in the North come from the same ethnic groups leading to perceptions that the LRA conflict was a North-South conflict.

The perception of 'victimhood' is common amongst the residents of northern Uganda. The population feels that they have been marginalized right from independence and that underdevelopment, insecurity, poverty, poor infrastructure and high mortality rates have been common features in the region. In fact, one can argue that the North has become much more impoverished during the post-independence period. The region had much better economic conditions during the colonial period because of the colonial government's recruitment of the northerners into the army which in return brought economic development into the region. However, the claims to 'victimhood' by the North have often been countered by arguments that the northern leaders like Milton Obote and Idi Amin were brutal against the southerners, creating a deep rift between the two regions. Besides, the LRA-GOU conflict is seen by many southerners as a self-inflicted victimization in which 'the Acholi are killing Acholi.'

The 22 year conflict between the LRA-GOU has gone through different phases. To a large extent the conflict has been militarized and the few attempts on peace negotiations have failed to bear much fruit. The spiritual and theological dimensions of both Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement/Army (HSM/A) and Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) ought to be analyzed within the framework of authentication and justification of the armed struggle. With the departure of Uganda People's Democratic Army/Movement (UPDA/M) following its signing of a peace agreement with GOU there was no formidable force in the North to fight against Museveni's Uganda People's Democratic Force (UPDF). Hence, the HSM to some extent and the LRA to a greater extent had to fill the

resistance vacuum. However, the diverse characterizations and representations of the LRA have meant that the group has been so fragmented, unclear about its objectives and contradictory in its purported intention of protecting the North from the Southern domination. The LRA's peace negotiations have also been subjected to diverse political and social interests leading to the failure of peace talks.

In the second phase I conducted field research in northern Uganda to further interrogate the above generalized assertions of liberal peace critics. I identified two locations: Gulu where a variety of NGOs have been very active in conducting peacebuilding, and Atiak, the control population, where there has not been active involvement of NGOs in peacebuilding. The selection of these two locations was to determine the extent to which the presence or lack of presence of NGOs was a factor in the conceptualization of and approach to peacebuilding by the local community. The data samples included NGO personnel involved in peacebuilding activities, donor agencies, and leaders from community, cultural, government and religious sectors. I chose the participants based on their active participation in peacebuilding activities, their capacity to positively or negatively influence community participation in peacebuilding, and by virtue of their social status, as far as it had implications for peacebuilding activities. I have elaborated these aspects in detail, in Chapter One.

In the data analysis I carried out a micro analysis of the post-conflict context of these sites in northern Uganda in order to understand the peacebuilding processes and interactions between NGOs, donors and local community. The

study has demonstrated that *NGO peacebuilding was based on complex interactive relationships between the NGOs, donors and local community.* I have demonstrated these aspects in Chapters Five and Six. Internal and external influences on NGO peacebuilding have been conceptualized within relational constructionism as part of a continuous process of co-construction of the peace reality in the interaction between different peace agents in Atiak, and in Gulu between NGOs, donors and local community. This has been manifested through joint practices in community peacebuilding, such as networking, advocacy, workshops and training of peace agents in the community, schools and government institutions. These interactive interventions have engendered a peace culture.

Dialogue emerged as an important approach to peacebuilding. Each level of interaction, whether between NGOs and donors, or NGOs and community, entailed inter-subjective encounters that were dialogical in character and aimed at co-constructing a new reality of peace founded on the aspiration of the people. This phenomenon manifested itself at different points during the research. In fact most participants (32 out of 49) referred to dialogue, discussions and regular encounters as a general practice. This showed how relationship-building was embedded in the different peacebuilding processes. I was particularly struck by the manner in which there had been efforts, through the use of dialogue, to bridge relationships and understanding between NGOs and local community, and between NGOs and donors. In Atiak relationship building was evident in the peacebuilding activities carried out by the community and government leaders. For example, I have discussed how the parents'

association was concerned about the abuse of girls and reintegration of the formerly abducted and worked with the local government and community leaders in addressing these social challenges.

I have reiterated the fact that *language* is an important element in constituting a "socially constructed knowledge" (Willig, 2001: 7). As such the different sense-making and interactive processes within the communities in Gulu and Atiak led to knowledge claims that developed into peacebuilding discourse and practice. These knowledge claims were grounded on relationships between NGOs and community, NGOs and donors, community members amongst themselves as well as community members and government leaders. Hence, instituting a culture of peace, in contrast to a culture of violence, meant that different peace agents engaged the community in dialogical conversations that sought to incorporate the victims and perpetrators of the conflict in a relational encounter. Peacebuilding was therefore based on a discourse that emphasized relational terms like forgiveness, reconciliation, mediation, working together, integration, tolerance, acceptance, understanding, group encounters, etc.

I indicated at the beginning of this thesis that my initial understanding before going to the field was that NGOs were responding to external conceptualizations of peacebuilding, mainly perpetuated by the western donors. However, my field research experience unveiled intricate levels of interactions within a very complex terrain of northern Uganda. Lack of appreciation of these levels of relational interactions would be a major hindsight in any analysis of

peacebuilding in northern Uganda. The setting of NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda was complex and could not be generalized under the characteristic categorization of post-conflict contexts, as purported by the liberal peace critics.

The complexity was evidenced by several realities: the *victim-perpetrator* duality that most ex-combatants had to carry with them meant that the majority of the LRA combatants had been abducted (and were therefore victims) and forced to commit various forms of atrocities (and were therefore perpetrators) in their own community; the internalized nature of the conflict was evidenced by the fact of the 'Acholi-killing-Acholi' which led to intense divisions, hatred and acts of revenge between individuals, families and clans; the population was further divided by the fact that families had children in both the UPDF and LRA; the protracted nature of the conflict, spanning 22 years, implied that there was a whole generation of youth that had never known peace, and therefore needed to adopt new attitudes, perceptions and understanding in embracing a culture of peace.

The above contextual complexity posed a number of challenges to peacebuilding in both Gulu and Atiak: there were diverse understandings of what constitutes peace and how it manifests itself. Some participants were of the opinion that peace had to be concretely experienced in their lives for them to appreciate it. Others in Gulu held the view that the failure to realize the peace dividend in economic terms had a negative impact on the community members' enthusiasm to participate in peacebuilding activities. Peace agents in both Gulu

and Atiak were therefore faced with the challenge of balancing the internal and external needs of peacebuilding: on the one hand, the recognition of the individual identity, aspirations in life, dignity and freedoms, and on the other, the provision of the basic needs for social, economic and political well-being. In Gulu NGOs helped the community to address basic needs provision whereas in Atiak the community struggled on its own. A few participants (3 out of 6) in Atiak did not feel motivated to take part in the peacebuilding initiatives because they believed that the region was peaceful following the 2006 ceasefire agreement between the LRA and government. I came across similar sentiments during informal interviews with community and religious leaders in Atiak. Another challenge to peacebuilding was that many people were still uncertain about the future of peace in northern Uganda. This concern was more pronounced in Atiak, which as I have already stated, is on the Sudan border regions where the LRA attacked from. This situation of uncertainty made it difficult for the people to fully participate in the peace programmes. The issue of reintegration of the formerly abducted persons, while a challenge to both Gulu and Atiak communities, was more articulated in Atiak. In Gulu the NGOs assisted the formerly abducted persons: they were received in organized reception camps where they had counselling, trauma healing, vocational training and a systematic process of reintegration into the community. In Atiak, due to limited resources, the community struggled to integrate the formerly abducted persons.

I was struck by the high level of resilience among the Acholi community despite the many challenges related to the impact of the conflict. The memories of war were fresh in participants' minds. The 22 year conflict had left a big scar in people's lives. However, despite these fresh memories of painful experiences,

the community members committed themselves to start life again and rebuild their lives. This resilience was demonstrated by their refusal to be paralyzed by the complexities of conflict. They instead engaged in joint peacebuilding efforts that generated relational constructionism approaches to conflict intervention. This process of exploration of a different future for the community was grounded on encounters in which participants challenged each other to creatively design ways in which they could respond to the impact of conflict. This process of diverse encounters was important in changing people's attitude from a culture of violence to a culture of peace.

The communities in both Gulu and Atiak were confronted by five main challenges in peacebuilding: land disputes; the need for reconciliation of parties in conflict; human rights abuses; lack of basic needs; and the need for reintegration of the formerly abducted persons and former LRA rebels. In Gulu, NGOs in collaboration with the local community responded to all the five challenges through alternative dispute resolution in land disputes; provision of basic needs through social services and initiation of income generating activities; human rights advocacy and support programmes for the formerly abducted persons and former LRA rebels.

The extent to which liberal peace is relevant to the local context has to be considered in relation to the complexities of the issues on the ground. There are values promoted by the liberal peace that are intrinsically good such as protection of human dignity through human rights advocacy; political participation at different levels of the society to ensure that different groups feel represented as part and parcel of the larger society; and, security and the rule of

law as a means of establishing order and protecting the most vulnerable members of the society. For example, human rights advocacy by NGOs in Gulu led to the provision of safety nets for the vulnerable women in the community, and at the same time put pressure on the government military and police to stop physical abuse of citizens.

In Atiak, due to lack of sufficient resources the community struggled to meet the above challenges. They responded to four of them by: conducting alternative dispute resolution (ADR) through mediation on land conflicts; carrying out reconciliation sessions; putting efforts towards reintegration of the formerly abducted and ex-combatants; and assisted the old and vulnerable by repairing and constructing their houses, and accommodating the homeless. The community did not possess an extensive network like NGOs to conduct advocacy activities against human rights abuses. They however carried out localized advocacy on the need to protect vulnerable girls and young mothers and to reintegrate the youth. These observations demonstrate how NGO presence in Gulu improved the quality of peacebuilding responses to the local needs. However, the fact that NGOs responded to similar needs as those in Atiak demonstrated the fact that NGO peacebuilding activities were to a great extent grounded on the genuine needs of the people.

The northern Uganda community was faced with the moral dilemma of addressing the 'victim-perpetrator' phenomenon. On the one hand, the grievous nature of the atrocities committed by the LRA rebels was such that the law should have been meted out on the perpetrators. On the other hand, the fact that some of the so called 'rebels' were also victims of abduction meant that the

requisite measure of justice needed to be balanced against the victimhood of abduction. The communities both in Gulu and Atiak engaged in conversations about how to address the challenge of forgiveness, reconciliation and reintegration. One of the propositions was to explore the cultural mechanisms of reconciliation as a means of bringing harmony to the community. The communities in both Gulu and Atiak thus applied, in limited ways, cultural mechanisms of reconciliation like *mato oput* which referred to the drinking of the bitter juice of *oput* tree as a gesture of ending all bitterness between the parties in conflict. Another ritual was *nyono tong gueno* which was performed by stepping an egg in order to reclaim one's innocence. While in Atiak the community was at the very early stages of implementing these rituals, in Gulu the NGOs put in financial and logistic resources and enthusiastically begun the process of performing these rituals in collaboration with the community. Even though the cultural practices of reconciliation were still at nascent stages, they provided a potential platform for transcending the difficult situations of northern Uganda conflict. The exploration of the rituals also demonstrated the depth of the search for solution towards reconciliation. In a sense, rituals opened up a new window for demystification of the disabling effect of the complexity of reconciliation.

However, in both Gulu and Atiak there were disagreements among the participants on the value, procedure and execution of the rituals. There were those who held the view that the rituals could be a better compromise for reconciliation and harmony; others observed that the rubrics of the rituals had been ignored, hence violating the essence and value of reconciliation; others emphasized that the perpetrators should be treated as criminals, tried and

imprisoned. Community leaders as well as members of the peacebuilding committees reiterated the importance of reconciliation but did not agree on its potential to bring peace in northern Uganda. My interview conversations with Dr. Okumu, an Acholi anthropologist, enlightened me as to how deeply the desire for reconciliation was enshrined in the attempts to bring back rituals as a means of reconciliation. He was against the perception that NGOs were responsible for bringing back the reconciliation rituals. His view was that the Acholi have always valued reconciliation as a medium for maintaining good relationships between individuals, families, clans and other ethnic communities. Informal interviews with religious leaders and elders in both Gulu and Atiak indicated that the decision to bring back the rituals was mainly initiated by the Acholi elders but the challenge lay with how to proceed with the rituals. Archbishop Odama, the leader of the Acholi Religious for Peace Initiative (ARLPI), was emphatic that the communities in northern Uganda were ready and willing to engage in a reconciliation process (LNGO-PC001, interviewed 19/01/10). As I have indicated in Chapter Five, Odama reiterated the fact that different communities had their own reconciliation rituals which could be reintroduced to address the challenges posed by the conflict. This approach emphasized restorative justice that was centred on restoring broken relationships.

In my analysis, the full potential of the rituals of reconciliation had not been attained and there was still need for a more widespread awareness-raising within the community. Besides, the culturally-based rituals of reconciliation had never been meant to address crimes as those that had been witnessed in Uganda. The rituals as I have explained in Chapters Four, Five and Six often

addressed inter-personal, inter-family or inter-clan conflicts and not mass killings and abductions, as was the case in the LRA-GOU conflict.

Contrary to some of the literature on northern Uganda, I argue that the culturally-based rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation were not widely practiced. The use of rituals of reconciliation and reintegration were promoted by the NGOs and cultural leaders but had not become popular. For example, I came across very few people who had actually witnessed the *mato oput* ritual. The ritual was held in high esteem by most participants, from the NGOs (17 out of 27) and communities (9 out of 15) in both Gulu and Atiak, but it was hardly practiced, as I have demonstrated in Chapter Five. There were also debates on the appropriateness and effectiveness of reconciliation rituals in providing transitional space for innovative ways of healing the community. Hence, I would argue that NGOs attempted to institutionalize the cultural rituals of reconciliation and in the process watered down their enshrined values.

One of the main contributions of this study to the general peacebuilding literature is the discourse on reconciliation with the spirits of the dead, which remains an under-researched area in the peacebuilding literature. The general trend in peace studies is to analyse the cause and effect based on the material world. However, in some cultural settings like the Acholi community, the cause and effect goes beyond the material world into the realm of the spirits. Thus, a cosmological analysis of the cultural and anthropological perceptions of the local reality of the Acholi was important in understanding the practice of reconciliation with the dead.

The ICC intervention impacted peacebuilding processes, both at the grassroots and at the protagonists' levels. The ICC issued warrants of arrests against the LRA leaders bearing greatest responsibility. The ICC held the position that if these leaders were not arrested and tried in court, it would be an indication that such criminal acts could in future be committed with impunity. On the other hand some of the participants were of the opinion that the ICC intervention came at the wrong time and as a result derailed the peace process. There were also participants who were convinced that the ICC intervention put pressure on the LRA to come to the negotiation table, subsequently leading to relative peace since 2006. I have expounded on this debate in Chapter Five.

I have emphasized the fact that peacebuilding is essentially a *relational* process. The constant references by participants to 'partnership', 'collaboration' and 'coordination' underscored the fact that there had been a gradual shift towards a relational constructionism of peacebuilding through joint enterprises. I used theoretical sampling to deepen these concepts to the point of theoretical saturation. These methods of grounded theory were particularly important in helping me understand how people valued 'working together', 'relationships' and 'collaboration' in their peacebuilding activities.

The views of most community participants (12 out of 15), both from Gulu and Atiak, reflected the fact that peacebuilding was a communitarian affair that needed to be experienced within a communitarian space. As I have noted in chapters 3-6, in relational constructionism this space is referred to as

‘transitional space’ and was mainly experienced in workshops, reconciliation rituals, mediation processes and networking meetings. These activities and processes produced creative imagination of the desired future by using dialogical encounters, relational leadership and cultural heritage. Relationships produced social capital at the grassroots level, which became what Peirce and Stubbs (2000:173) would refer to as “vital sources of ‘peace capital.’ In other words, the solidarity network within the peacebuilding practice spread into building up a wider constituency of peace practitioners. The attitude of ‘togetherness’ developed into a strong solidarity tool that helped the people to engage with the complexities of the northern Uganda conflict. The attitude of ‘togetherness’ manifested itself in the complexities of victim-perpetrator perceptions; shared experiences of suffering the brutality of the war; personal encounters with the victims of conflict; the struggle to reconstruct new life; and the challenge of forgiveness and reconciliation. Peacebuilding initiatives facilitated diverse processes of relationship building through interactions that led to the construction of new knowledge of peace, mutual respect and compromises for peaceful coexistence.

The findings on relationship building were significant because they contradicted the liberal peace assertion that NGOs peacebuilding simply implement the top-down agenda of the donor agencies and their governments. This was evidenced by the fact that on the one hand, relationship building emerged spontaneously as a result of the shared communitarian attitude to social issues, and on the other, it was pursued as a value through conflict mediation and reconciliation efforts. My analysis demonstrated that it is important to appreciate the diverse levels of interaction and how participants evaluated their experiences of relating

with each other; the changes in attitudes and perceptions; and the positive progress in peacebuilding activities. Further, mutual recognition and joint enterprises were key components in relationship building. It was therefore vital to understand the embedded co-construction of peacebuilding discourse and practice in the course of this continuous interaction. Relationship building was reinforced by participatory approach to NGO peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding approaches in both Gulu and Atiak applied *participatory approach to peacebuilding* in order to encourage community ownership of peacebuilding activities. In Gulu this was done at different levels: NGOs joined the community in supporting peacebuilding initiatives; consulted with the community on the lessons learned and best practices in peacebuilding; trained peacebuilding coordinators, paralegals, teachers, students, youth, and community and group leaders that were engaged in income generating activities (IGA). In Atiak community leaders mobilized the community to participate in peacebuilding activities. This was sometimes met with resistance particularly among the youth who strongly felt that the community should put priority in creating opportunities for education, vocational training and employment. In Gulu, besides individual or group motivation to participate in peacebuilding, NGOs often gave remunerations to peacebuilding participants as reward for their involvement. This practice, as I have stated in Chapter Five, increased community participation but blurred the distinction between genuine motivation for peacebuilding and mere participation for remuneration.

Peacebuilding meetings between different agents in both Gulu and Atiak provided a transitional space for exploration of a different future. Lederach

(1995:55) notes that conflict intervention, whether in form of training workshops, mediation or dialogue, provides opportunities "aimed primarily at discovery, creation, and solidification of models that emerge from the resources present in a particular setting…" Hence, the community is not just a beneficiary but an active participant to change. Interventions of the peace agents in Gulu and Atiak generated community peace agents that became a *critical mass* and formed peacebuilding communities, also known in relational constructionism as 'communities of practice' (CoP). These peace agents contributed to the sustainability of the peacebuilding programmes.

In Gulu, NGOs worked in partnership with the donors and negotiated for funding in three interrelated dimensions: first, *constrained dialogue* that limited the extent to which NGOs had a decisive role in the project conceptualization and implementation. NGOs that had been in this kind of dialogue with the donors experienced tensions between the needs on the ground and demands of the donors. In most cases NGOs gave in to the demands of the donors to access funding. The second was *negotiated agreements* which were based on mutual exchange, conversations and dialogue between the NGOs and donors. In this category there were efforts to meet the needs on the ground. The third was *dialogical partnership,* which emphasized joint enterprises between the NGOs and donors. These joint activities reinforced relationship building and an interactive approach to peacebuilding.

In Atiak, as I have already stated above, peacebuilding activities were not funded and the community made contributions from their meagre resources in

terms of providing meeting venues, food, furniture, infrastructure and volunteers who would implement the peacebuilding propositions. Hence, peacebuilding design and implementation were carried out within the limited means available. This point partly explains the low numbers of peacebuilding activities in Atiak.

I was also interested in understanding how the grassroots level of relationship building could filter into systems of governance. I did this by looking at the advocacy activities carried out by NGOs and local community. As I have demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six, advocacy processes were sophisticated, in some cases putting at risk the lives of those advocating against the perpetrators of violence. However, tensions generated by advocacy activities were sometimes transformed into opportunities for awareness raising, mutual understanding and relationship building. I cited in Chapter Five the example of an NGO that spoke against human rights abuses carried out by the government army. One of the army officials involved retaliated by issuing threats to the human rights advocates. However, with time junior members of the army began reporting cases of abuse by senior military personnel. As a result, the advocacy activities created an opportunity for encounter of values based on human dignity and mutual respect. The study therefore shows that engaging institutions of governance through advocacy, negotiations and dialogue enhanced relationship building and increased the probability of sustainability of the culture of peace.

This study has emphasized that the core of community participation in peacebuilding lay in the internal motivation for social change based on the commonly shared experiences of conflict. As I have elaborated in Chapter Five,

I realized in the early stages of my field research that it was important to understand participants' motivation for participating in peace activities. This turned out to be an important factor and one that elaborated on the individual's deeper conviction for the work they were doing for peace. The degree to which this motivational drive was manifested and expressed varied between Gulu and Atiak, as I have previously discussed.

I linked the issue of motivational drive to *sustainability of peacebuilding activities*. At first I had the difficulty of assessing sustainability of peacebuilding activities because it implied speculating into the future. However, in the course of field research I realized that rather than undertake speculative research that would have no immediate empirical backing, it was more reasonable to link the sustainability of peacebuilding activities to both individual and group motivational drive on the one hand, and community and NGO theories of social change, on the other. Since I had already established that there was a high motivation for participation in peacebuilding activities with or without the presence of NGOs, I assessed how NGO initiatives were contributing to the peacebuilding discourse and practice, and related this to sustainability of peacebuilding activities in both Gulu and Atiak. In order to do this I looked at NGOs' theories of change.

I learned in this study that while NGOs did not have clear theories of change, they nevertheless developed mechanisms of assessing change based on the impact they were having on the community. Change was assessed based on quantitative and qualitative outcomes. Quantitative aspects of change were manifested by the number of peacebuilding activities (workshops, mediation

processes, meetings, rituals and celebrations), people participating in these activities and locations reached. In both Gulu and Atiak the community, similar to NGOs, assessed qualitative outcomes based on changes in attitudes and perceptions, embracing of a culture of peace and positive results of mediation and reconciliation initiatives. Thus, relationship building that resulted from IGA encounters and human rights advocacy in Gulu or dialogical conversations that developed from workshops and community meetings in both Gulu and Atiak were all part of the broader change processes. This meant that assessing social change linked to the broader perspectives of peace processes.

In the course of interrogations of the data I realized that it was indeed difficult to assess the impact NGOs were having on their peace initiatives in Gulu. The assessment methods presupposed that the expected outcomes and their indicators were identifiable and co-relational. The research shows that peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA) was an essential tool in evaluating the extent to which the peacebuilding practice was informed by the local reality. I was therefore interested in understanding both the approach to PCIA and key indicators that NGOs used in evaluating the changes on the ground. The approaches applied by the NGOs included looking at the aimed objectives; the impact of the intervention on the conflict as well as that of the conflict on the project; and the process of social change triggered by the peace initiatives. However, the question that most NGO participants found difficult to answer was how they came to identify the key indicators for change. In fact, most NGO participants (23 out of 27) did not a have a common set of indicators to monitor social change. To some extent, this was understandable because it would generally have been difficult to measure a social change phenomenon,

especially within a constrained time frame (based on the funding cycle) and unpredictable post-conflict situations. Besides, in most cases processes of social change were longitudinal, often lasting beyond the span of the peace project.

The view of the community members both in Gulu and Atiak was that sustainability of peacebuilding initiatives should be linked to the provision of basic needs and communitarian ownership of the peace building process. I noted a sense of – 'we are in this together' – among community participants, indicating a common ownership of the peacebuilding process. At the same time, the social changes that people had experienced became incentives for a strong motivation to achieve the desired changes.

In my view, the assessment of the impact of NGO peacebuilding was important in understanding the extent to which NGOs influenced the peacebuilding discourse and practice. This revealed the extent to which peacebuilding practices in Gulu were different from Atiak; whether NGOs were serving a liberal peace agenda blindly or were closely responding to the needs of the community on the ground whether or not this fitted with the liberal peace agenda; and lastly, whether the departure of NGOs would impact on peacebuilding processes in northern Uganda. It is important to remember that prior to the coming of the NGOs in Gulu there were peacebuilding activities in existence in both Gulu and Atiak, mainly led by the religious and community leaders.

The presence of NGOs in Gulu facilitated the peacebuilding activities through financial, logistic and personnel resources. NGOs cushioned the negative impact of conflict on the population in Gulu by working with the community in organizing peacebuilding activities, availing resources to realize peace initiatives, support income generating activities and provide technical skills to the youth. NGOs in Gulu equally assisted the government in the provision of social services. The presence of NGOs in Gulu also increased the number of peacebuilding activities in comparison to Atiak that had limited activities.

I have noted in Chapters Five and Six that NGOs, in an attempt to popularize culturally-based mechanisms of reconciliation, decided to institutionalize these practices without fully engaging in a dialogical process with the community. Institutionalization of the rituals of reconciliation such as *mato oput* was largely attributed to NGOs' initiative of funding such activities. NGOs were oblivious to the fact that while the Acholi community was in the process of searching for the best ways to deal with the complexities of the conflict, they were not necessarily ready for a speedy and institutionalized process of reconciliation. This approach was counterproductive and exposed the fact that there were instances where NGOs were not grounded in the social-cultural dynamics of the local community.

NGOs' lack of grounding was also exposed by the fact that some NGOs gave in to the demands of the donors and compromised the needs of the community. As I have explained in Chapter Six, NGOs that operated under the category of 'constrained funding' had limited choices on what they could or could not do. In these situations, NGOs served the demands of the donors, whether these were

meeting the demands of the needs on the ground or not. As a result, there were NGOs that adjusted their programmes to attract donor funding and in the process served a different agenda, such as liberal peace, which in some cases was unrelated to peacebuilding needs on the ground. This was evident in cases where NGOs rushed ahead with the culturally-based mechanisms of reconciliation while the community was not yet ready; or where donors had shifted their funding priority from peacebuilding to HIV/AIDS programmes, as I have indicated in Chapter Six. Dialogical tensions between these NGOs and their donors reflected dynamism of power-relations. In fact, the relationship between the donors and NGOs intrinsically reflected power-relations between the *giver* and the *recipient,* respectively. Hence, the giver became the *generous*, and the recipient, the *grateful*.

The practice of paying remunerations to peacebuilding participants as a way of rewarding their participation set a wrong precedence on peacebuilding processes. NGOs that carried out this practice perpetuated the dependency syndrome that had been acquired in the IDP camps; undermined spontaneous participation to peacebuilding activities; and marginalized smaller NGOs that could not afford to reward their participants.

Another important observation for the assessment of NGOs is that there were instances where NGOs' external intervention showed that liberal peace agenda, when undertaken in consultation with the community, could lead to positive results. For example, while human rights advocacy is generally associated with liberal peace, NGOs carried out human rights advocacy to assist the vulnerable

members of the community. The interventions were particularly important in situations where the vulnerable section of the population was exposed to further negative impact of post-conflict repercussions. For example, women that had returned from captivity with children were often despised as bringing up children possessed by the bad spirits of the LRA combatants. NGOs intervened to give this group of women special assistance that shielded them from suffering further rejection. They subsequently acquired skills such as tailoring and baking that gave them self-confidence and created opportunity for them to be inserted into the community once again.

The situation in Atiak was different. While the motivation for peacebuilding and networking between different agents for peace was evident, the community was faced with numerous obstacles without external assistance other than meagre government interventions. Peacebuilding activities in Atiak did not have the capacity and resources to mobilize the community in a similar manner to NGOs did in Gulu. Besides, vulnerable members of the community like the youth, formerly abducted persons (especially women), the old and the sick did not receive the same level of assistance in social services. This meant that the youth could easily be lured to join the LRA and acquire arms for power, control, self-assertion and acquisition of basic needs. The lack of NGOs in Atiak also indicated that in situations where the population had been grievously affected by the conflict, it is important for external actors to intervene in order to work with the community in post-conflict recovery. Going by the evidence in Gulu, the presence of NGOs in Atiak would have increased peacebuilding activities as

well as boosted the community motivation for participating in peacebuilding activities.

On the other hand, the fact that there were local peacebuilding initiatives in Atiak despite the NGO absence, and similar participation in Gulu before the NGOs got involved in peacebuilding activities, meant that the people's motivation for peace was the major driving force behind community peacebuilding. In other words, while the departure of NGOs would impact on peacebuilding activities, it would probably not take away the people's desire to find solutions for their own conflict, a process they had begun before the involvement of NGOs. Thus, NGOs could be viewed as one of the key partners in peacebuilding, but not the primary leaders of the process. The community took the lead in keeping the passionate drive for peace. In this sense, NGOs emerged as *process-mediators* and not the primary drivers of the peacebuilding agenda despite their strong influence in Gulu.

Thus, in conclusion I would assert that assessment of the extent to which NGO peacebuilding was informed by the local reality and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding ought to be undertaken within an elaborate analysis that captures the complexities, convergences and divergences of the reality of peacebuilding on the ground. In other words, while to a great extent NGO peacebuilding was informed by the local reality, the contextual dynamics and complexities in northern Uganda meant that there were instances where the work of NGOs was not grounded. There were also situations where the NGO adaptation of liberal peace values, such as human rights, was congruent to the needs of the community. The post-conflict context of northern Uganda

represents the complexities of most post-conflict contexts and demonstrates how conflict interventions in these situations need to be analyzed from both micro and macro perspectives.

Peacebuilding processes in northern Uganda display different characterizations of NGO, donors and local communities. Whereas there were NGOs that constantly engaged with the donors in dialogical encounters to attain the needs of the community, there were others that attuned their activities to the demands of the donors, hence missing out on the genuine needs of the community. Similarly, not all donors propagated a liberal peace agenda. There were some that genuinely engaged with the NGOs and the community in response to contextual challenges and others that held to their positions and interests regardless of whether the needs of the community were being met or not. Lastly, the local community both in Gulu and Atiak had different facets and could not be evaluated as single units. The challenging situation of poverty, unemployment and trauma meant that NGO intervention cushioned the Gulu community to actively participate in peacebuilding activities. There were some within the community who appreciated these NGO interventions whereas others were sceptical about their sustainability. In Atiak the peace agents worked under more difficult and frustrating conditions than in Gulu where NGOs supported peacebuilding activities. As a result, in Atiak there was a general apathy towards peacebuilding among some community members, whereas others felt determined to hold the community together through peacebuilding initiatives. In both Atiak and Gulu there were members of the community that were positive about initiatives for reconciliation and land conflict mediation, whereas others held the opinion that the major priority for the community was provision of basic

needs, security and employment. In short, peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts is a complex process and ought to be analysed within the complex dynamics of conflict, diverse perceptions and interpretations of the conflict, multiple attempts to conflict resolution and local capacities to effect change.

Future Research

The study of liberal peace has mainly been based on the critique of post-conflict approaches to statebuilding, largely funded by western nations. My research has shown that there is need to carry out micro level analysis of post-conflict reconstruction in order to identify the existent peacebuilding discourse and practice on the ground. This study can be enriched further by other future research that could examine different perspectives in NGO peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

One area for future research would be the study of NGO peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts in Africa, particularly those that have had a heavy presence of UN peacekeeping forces based on the funding from western nations. These contexts could include the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which has the largest UN peace keeping force in the world and Darfur which is under both the African Union (AU) and UN peace keeping forces. So far most liberal peace critics have largely limited their critiques to post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia, Croatia, East Timor, among others. Besides Sierra Leone and Somalia, most post-conflict settings in Africa have not been adequately researched to examine the extent to which liberal peace has been

imposed on the peacebuilding practices. The study of liberal peace in Africa would further put to test the assertions of liberal peace critiques.

The second area that needs to be researched is the contribution of culturally-based mechanisms of peacebuilding in northern Uganda. In the discussions in Chapters Five and Six, it is evident that these mechanisms have recently been re-introduced and are not as widely practiced as generally purported by the literature on northern Uganda. It would be important to conduct research after 5-7 years to examine how culturally-based mechanisms contributed to reconciliation and peace in northern Uganda. Such a study would analyse the extent to which these mechanisms were an invention of the NGOs or a genuine desire for peace by the local community. The findings would also inform the practice of peacebuilding in other post-conflict contexts in Africa and elsewhere.

In conjunction with the proposed research above, it would be important to undertake a study of community peacebuilding in the post-NGO era in northern Uganda. The study would examine the extent to which peacebuilding approaches supported by the NGOs were grounded in the people's desire to effect social change. Such a study would assess the long term impact of NGO approaches to peacebuilding in the post-conflict setting of northern Uganda.

The third possibility for future research in northern Uganda could be the study of reintegration of the formerly abducted persons as well as ex-combatants. This study would be much more appropriate after the signing of the peace agreement between the LRA-GOU. The study would examine the relationship between the signing of the peace agreement and the extent of the success of the

reintegration programmes; the implications of the agreement in responding to the North-South grievances, democratic processes, and sustainability of peace. The study would also examine the impact of peace agreement on regional peace, particularly given that currently the LRA continues its rebel activities in Sudan, Central African Republic and DRC.

The fourth area for future research would be the study of the ICC interventions in African conflicts and the extent to which such interventions impact on conflict dynamics and peacebuilding discourse and practice. Such a study would examine the extent to which the ICC interventions fall under the liberal peace agenda. The African Union has refused to cooperate with the ICC on the ground that the latter maintains a double standard in its approach to addressing crimes against humanity. For example, since its inception in 2002, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has mainly focused on Africa, with six out of seven cases coming from the continent. Statistics show that all the 26 individuals wanted for crimes against humanity are from Africa: Uganda (4), Darfur (6), DR Congo (5), Central Africa Republic (1), Kenya (6) and recently Libya (4). Out of these, 16 individuals have been indicted in the first four countries (International Criminal Court, 2010). Two of the arrest warrants have been issued on seating heads of states: against Presidents Omar El Bashir of Sudan in 2008 and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya in 2011. There are other investigations under way in Colombia, Afghanistan and Georgia. Thus, future study would examine the relevance of the ICC interventions on peace processes in Africa; alternative approaches to humanitarian military interventions particularly in situations of gross violation of human rights; diverse local and international mechanisms to transitional justice.

Appendix

Table 1: List of insurgencies in Uganda since independence

Year	Events
1962	Uganda gains its independence from the British Colonialists. Milton Obote becomes the first Prime Minister and Buganda's Kabaka Mutesa II the first President
1966	A dispute emerges between Obote and Mutesa II over the constitutional status of the Buganda Kingdom. Following the differences between the two, the Kabaka parliament, the *Lukiiko,* orders central government of Obote to leave the Buganda soil by end of May 1966. In retaliation Obote makes a military attack against Kabaka's palace, suspends the constitution and parliament, assumes all powers and makes himself the president and head of state. The Kabaka Mutesa II goes on exile in 1969, marking the end of the political kingdom of the Buganda.
1971	Major General Idi Amin overthrows Obote who was out of the country attending a Common Wealth meeting in Singapore. During his eight year rule many civilians are killed, the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups are particularly targeted.
1973	Yoweri Museveni forms the Front for National Salvation (FRONASA), a rebel group against Amin's regime. FRONASA has mainly members from Museveni's western region and others from the southern regions.
1979	The Tanzanian People's Defence Forces (TPDF) and rebel armed groups formed by Ugandan exiles known as Kikosi Maalum, in conjunction with FRONASA, attack Amin's army. The different opposition groups, while in Arusha, Tanzania, come together under one umbrella and form the Uganda National Liberation Front / Army (UNLF/ UNLA), and Yusuf Lule becomes the first Chairman. The TDPF and UNLA succeed in toppling Idi Amin, appoints Lule as President to run a Unity Government, but under the watch of the Tanzanian Military Commission and National Consultative Council (NCC) of the UNLF. The Military Commission eventually fires Lule and installs as president Godfrey Binaisa, former Obote's Attorney General.
1980	In the December General Election Obote's Uganda People's Congress (UPC) party is declared the winner and Obote becomes the President, marking the beginning of Obote II regime. The Democratic Party (DP) contests against the elections results, but eventually accepts to participate in parliament as an opposition party. Yoweri Museveni, who runs the election under his new party, Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM), refuses to accept the elections and decides to organized armed insurgencies against Obote's regime.

1981-1985 – Insurgencies	Museveni fights Obote under Popular Revolutionary Army (PRA). Obote is also under attack in the West Nile region by Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF). In the meantime Tanzania withdraws its forces in June 1981 1982 – Different armed groups come together under Uganda Popular Front (UPF) to fight Obote. These included: Armed opposition groups, Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) from the Buganda region; National Rescue Front (UNRF) with members mainly from Amin's region in the northwest; and Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) dominated by people from western Uganda. The NRM becomes the dominant group, particularly around the Luwero area. This prompts Obote's UNLA to make attacks on Luwero leading to the massacres of civilians in what came to be known as 'Luwero Triangle Massacres'. Other groups fighting Obote included: Former Uganda National Army (FUNA), whose members had been in Amin's army; and the Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU), which was based within Buganda region. In retaliation Obote's UNLA led counterinsurgency operations in different parts of the country, mainly: Karamoja in the northeast, Arua and Moyo in the northwest, and Luwero region in the north of Kampala. Thousands of civilians lost their lives in these operations and UN estimates in its 1983 report that more than 260,000 refugees had fled to Sudan and Zaire (now DRC).
1985	Obote is overthrown by Brigadier Bazilio Olara Okello who becomes president and invites the different rebel groups that had been fighting Obote to join him. As a result the following armed groups join Okello's government: FUNA, UFM, FEDEMU and UNRF. However, Museveni's NRM decline to join the new government, but agrees to peace talks. Following peace talks in Nairobi between the Okello government and the NRM, the two sign a peace agreement in December 1985, but weeks later the NRM withdraws from the peace agreement and leads insurgencies against Okello.
1986	**January:** NRM defeats Okello's army and takes over, marking the beginning of Museveni's rule. **July:** The defeated government army (ex-UNLA) forms Uganda People's Democratic Army / Movement (UPDA/M) to fight Museveni. **August**: NRA / FEDEMU / UFM are said to have executed a large number of civilians at Namokora, Akilok, Oryang and Padibe areas. **September:** Alice Auma 'Lakwena' forms a rebel group known as the Holy Spirit Mobile Force (HSMF) and later HSMF join forces with UPDA to fight Museveni's government.

1987	Joseph Kony fights along the HSMF with his small group of rebels. **August**: 'Karamojong' cattle raiders, suspected to be sponsored by Museveni's government, attack Kitgum and eastern Gulu looting more than 300,000 livestock of the Acholi community, subsequently impoverishing the whole Acholi region. **November** The HSMF spirited insurgency against the government is defeated by the NRA at Jinja. Subsequently, Alice Lakwena flees to Kenya.
1988	Joseph Kony's rebel group, United Holy Salvation Army (UHSA), emerges following the defeat of HSMF and integrates some of the latter's members. **June:** NRA and UPDA sign a peace agreement and UPDA members are integrated into the national army. A similar peace agreement is signed with a political wing of the rebels, the UPDM.
1989	**April**: Government orders populations in Acholi land out of their villages into 'protected' camps while Joseph Kony intensifies his insurgencies, and renames his group United Democratic Christian Movement /Army (UDCM/A).
1992	**August**: Joseph Kony changes the name of UDCM/A to *Lord's Resistance Army/ Movement* (LRA/M). The LRA attacks civilians and kidnaps thousands of people, especially children who are forced into joining the army. The Acholi population suffers atrocities from both the rebel LRA and government forces. The conflict between LRA and Uganda military intensifies between 1992 -2006, and again 2007 to date.
1999	The Carter Centre facilitates a peace agreement between Uganda and Sudanese government. This follows counter accusations that the Sudanese government was militarily supporting the LRA against Uganda government, while the latter was supporting Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) against the Sudanese government.
2002-2004	Government of Uganda (GOU) launches military offensive against the LRA bases in Sudan: in 2002 and 2004, *Operation Iron Fist I and II*, respectively.
2003	Museveni requests the ICC prosecutor to investigate the criminal activities of the LRA.
2005	The ICC issues warrants of arrest on the LRA rebel leaders named as Joseph Kony, Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo and Dominic Ongwen.
2006	Following a cease-fire agreement, peace talks are initiated in Juba, Southern Sudan, between the LRA and GOU. However, the two fail to reach an agreement. The LRA scatters into Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan and Central African republic (CAR).
2008	GOU forces launch *Operation Lighting Thunder* against the LRA in Sudan, but fail to defeat the rebels. The LRA are still at large to date.

Major references used for the compilation the table include: (Conciliation Resources, 2002; Karugire, 1996; Kasozi et al., 1994; Mutibwa, 1992; Finnström, 2008)

Box 1 Juba Peace Talks

Juba Peace Talks between the GOU and LRA 2006

Juba peace talks between the Government of Uganda (GOU) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) took place in Southern Sudan in 2006 and continued with a series of negotiations until 2008. The GOU was represented by a delegation led by the Internal Affairs Minister Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, while the LRA had its own delegates without Joseph Kony, their leader. The talks received both the support of the United Nations, African Union (AU), with its representative from Kenya, Tanzania, DRC and Mozambique attending the talks, as well as United States and other Western donor countries.

At the end of the formal negotiations in March 2008, the parties agreed to the following five major agendas (Oola, 2008:68):
i) *cessation of hostilities by both sides*: The LRA combatants had to gather in the designated Assembly Area of Ri-Kwang-Ba. The Agenda endorsed the establishment of an impartial Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team (CHMT). This team was made of representatives from Kenya, Tanzania, DRC, Mozambique and South Africa.
ii) *comprehensive solutions*: This entailed addressing the root causes of the conflict, mainly, the political and economic marginalization of the North;
iii) *Accountability and Reconciliation*: this focused on seeking ways of addressing human rights violations during the war within and out of Uganda. The agenda explores both judicial and culturally-based forms of justice as well as reconciliation and healing in all the affected communities.
iv) *Permanent Ceasefire*: This was to be observed by all parties in conflict
v) *Demobilization, Demilitarization and Reintegration* (DDR) of the former LRA combatants through a process of Implementation and Management Mechanisms (IMM); Joint Liaison Group (JIG); and an Oversight Forum.

The peace agreement was to be signed in Sudan on 10th April 2008 but only President Museveni showed up while the LRA leader, Kony, could not be traced. On 13th August 2009 the LRA's chief negotiator David Nyerokach-Matsanga and Justine Labeja resigned, and accused President Museveni and the LRA leader Kony, of lack of commitment (Juma, 14 August 2009).

Box 2 Gulu Peace Talks

In the preparation to the 1993 talks, the government created a new position known as *Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister*, *Resident in Northern Uganda*. The office was headed by Betty Bigombe. For five years Betty Bigombe engaged the people of Northern Uganda in grassroots peace mobilization and made several contacts with Joseph Kony, the LRA leader (Dolan, 2009:307-310). However, her attempts to bring Kony to the negotiation table run parallel to the military operations on the ground. Initially Betty Bigombe worked on building the confidence and trust of the LRA and GOU, and by October 1993 the two sides had agreed on modalities for mutual security.

In November of 1993, the LRA – GOU peace meeting begun at Pagik, in the Aswa region of Gulu. The Talks brought several Acholi elders and LRA representatives (Dolan, 2009:307). The LRA demanded a ceasefire in order to bring all its combatants to the peace negotiations; amnesty for its combatants as well as treatment of the

wounded; and exclusion of former UPDA/M rebels, now in the government, from the talks, since the UPDA/M had fought the LRA before signing a peace agreement with the GOU; a traditional cleansing ritual that would purify the combatants from the blood that had been shed in the conflict (O'kadameri, 2002, Dolan, 2009:307-315).

These talks never bore much fruit due to increased suspicion between the two sides and on 2nd February 1994 the LRA called off the negotiations, and four days later Museveni gave a four day ultimatum for the LRA to surrender (O'Kadameri, 2002). Animosity escalated leading to the collapse of the talks (O'Kadameri, 2002). Further peace negotiation attempts in 1988 also failed leading to more violence and attacks (Branch, 2005:15).

Data Collection Instruments

Research Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project examining the extent to which NGO peacebuilding is informed by the local reality in Gulu, northern Uganda. The research is part of the requirement for my PHD degree at University of Bradford, United Kingdom (U.K).

I am requesting you to participate in the marked interview category below:

a) Individual Interview ☐

b) Focus Group ☐

c) Participant observation ☐

In order for you to decide whether or not to participate in this research, please read the detailed information below, and feel free to contact me for further clarification. I would appreciate if you can let me know about your decision within three days or if you need more time please do not hesitate to contact me.

Information on the Researcher

Researcher's name:

Elias Omondi Opongo,

Contact:

Address: 40 Pakington St. BD5 7LD, Bradford, U.K.

Telephone: U.K. 447501893995 Uganda: 254720836944

Affiliation:

Doctoral student, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, UK.

Information on the Research

Title: *NGO Theoretical and Practical Approach to NGO Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda: An Analysis of Interactive Perspectives between NGO Peacebuilding and the Local Reality of Peacebuilding*

Introduction:

This research seeks to understand the factors that influence NGO peacebuilding in northern Uganda. The major focus is to investigate the extent to which NGO theoretical and practical approaches to peacebuilding are informed by the local reality in Gulu.

Location of the Research: Gulu, northern Uganda

Period of data collection: Dec 5th 2009 – May 30 2010

Primary aim: To *understand the extent to which NGO peacebuilding is informed by the local reality in Gulu, northern Uganda.*

Major Objectives:

1. To investigate how the theory and practice of NGO peacebuilding are influenced by the local reality and/or external conceptualizations of peacebuilding

2. To study the social attitudes of the local population towards NGO peacebuilding

Method and Target Participants: Data collection will mainly be carried out through interviews with individuals or in focus groups among selected NGOs, and local communities, both where NGOs are present and absent, respectively. Participant observation will be used to collect data. For NGO data, five international and three local NGOs will be interviewed, primarily focusing on peace coordinators and administrative personnel as principle participants. For the local community where NGOs are present, data collection will focus on local peace coordinators, sampled local community members who have directly participated in NGO peacebuilding activities and those that have not, community leaders, direct beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of NGO peacebuilding. Where NGOs are absent the focus will be on local leaders and sampled community members, as well as groups engaged in peacebuilding, if any.

Expectation on the participants: Each participant will be provided with this research information sheet. Once the participant is satisfied that he/she has understood what the research is about and is willing to participate in it, he/she will be requested to sign the consent form below. Confidentiality and anonymity will be observed during and after the interview. This means that all the contents of the interview will be treated confidentially and that the interviewee's identity will not be revealed to any other party. In the course of the interview the participant will be free to abandon an interview at anytime without giving any explanation to the researcher. The interviewees will be given the option of reading through the interview transcripts in order for them to edit, comment, correct, add or subtract their comments, and then return them to the researcher after three days. At the end of all the interviews, the interviewees will have the option of receiving a summary of the findings for comments, before the final publication. The participants will have two weeks to put their respective comments together and send them to the researcher. A form will be provided for the participants to confirm that they have read the transcript and agreed to its use. While the researcher will make the effort of taking into account the suggestions from the participants, he will retain the discretion of determining how the final document will read.

Types of questions to be asked: The participants will be asked questions on their perceptions on NGO peacebuilding; the approaches to peacebuilding by the NGOs and

local community, respectively; the external and internal influences on the practice of peacebuilding; values and theories that inform NGO peacebuilding; the points of convergence and divergence in NGO peacebuilding

Individual Interviews: Selected individuals from the NGOs and local communities where NGOs are active and non-active, respectively, will take part in individual interviews. These include peace coordinators of the respective NGOs and communities, participants in peacebuilding activities by the NGO and community. Every individual will be provided with this information sheet in order to decide whether or not to participate. Anonymity and confidentiality will be observed during and after the interview. The individual will be free to withdraw from the interview at any stage without giving any explanation. Individual interviews will last for up to two hours.

Focus Groups: A sampled group of participants (an average of 8 individuals) from the community where NGOs are active and where they (NGOs) are not, will be interviewed separately. The participants will be selected through consultation with the gatekeepers. Each participant will receive this information sheet in advance and his/her consent sought before the interview. The participants will be free to withdraw at anytime during the interview. However, while a participant can withdraw from the focus group discussion, he or she cannot retract the information already given. This is because focus group discussion entails a common process of construction of meaning through interactive discussion. Hence, individual contributions cannot stand alone. Even though the group will be aware of the contributions made by each individual, the researcher will observe anonymity and confidentiality as far as the identity and contributions of the participants are concerned. The focus group participants will also be expected to keep the discussions anonymous and confidential. The meeting will last between two to four hours.[77]

Participant observation: This will mainly take place during peacebuilding workshops conducted by NGO peace coordinators or community leaders. The researcher will first obtain permission for observation from the group leader or spokesperson who will then share with each participant the identity of the researcher and details about the research project. Individual consent of each participant will be sought with an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. The participants will be informed that every interaction with the researcher will be considered to be part of the data collection. The participants will be free not to interact with the researcher or withdraw from the observation at any stage. The time limit for participant observation will depend on the duration of the peace activity being examined.

Anonymity and confidentiality: The identity of the interviewee will be treated with anonymity. Where there are attributes that could make the identity of the interviewee obvious, these will be coded and remain known only to the interviewer. The identity of the participants will be treated confidentially in the publications and will only be disclosed at the request or with the permission of the respective participant. The names of NGOs will only be mentioned with the express permission of the relevant authorities, or when in reference to published documents (in websites, books or journals). The recorded responses from the interview as well as secondary data from the organizations will be treated confidentially by the researcher (or interviewer) and stored in a safe. The data from the interviews and peace activities will only be accessed by the researcher and his supervisor, if requested.

[77] The suggested duration of the focus group discussions include the time it will take for all the participants to arrive, and any logistical delays such as discovering that the room is not well prepared or double booked for some reason or another. However, my hope is that the discussions will not take more than two hours.

Archiving: The collected data from the interview will be kept in a safe for a period of 5 years, after which they will be destroyed.
Expected Outcomes: The information collected will be part of the researcher's PHD thesis.

Researcher's signature:.....
Date:.....

Consent Form

Title of Project: ***NGO Theoretical and Practical Approach to NGO Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda: An Analysis of Interactive Perspectives between NGO Peacebuilding and the Local Reality of Peacebuilding***

Researcher: Elias Omondi Opongo,

Contact:

Address: 40 Pakington St. BD5 7LD, Bradford, U.K. Telephone: 447501893995 or 254-730836944

Affiliation: Doctoral student, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, UK.

Please mark X in the box

I confirm that I have read and understood the research information sheet above – and sought clarifications whenever necessary. ☐

I agree to (choose one):

a) Be interviewed individually ☐

b) Be interviewed in a Focus group ☐

c) Be part of a group observed by the researcher ☐

I understand that my participation to this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at anytime without giving any reason for my decision ☐

I agree that the information collected could be used for publication as long as anonymity is observed, and that my name could only be used at my own request. ☐

I would like to receive the transcripts from the interview for editing, correction or additional comments

YES	NO

I therefore consent to taking part in this study.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

For Oral Consent

Declaration by researcher: I have given to the participant a verbal explanation of the research project, its aims, objectives and expectations, and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Researcher's name: .....

Signature .....

Date.....

Interpreter and Translator Confidentiality Agreement

Research Title: *NGO Theoretical and Practical Approach to NGO Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda: An Analysis of Interactive Perspectives between NGO Peacebuilding and the Local Reality of Peacebuilding*

I (full name).....

Of (address).....

_____

acknowledge that I will treat all information translated by me for the research project above with strict confidence and anonymity. I will ensure that all translated material, while in my possession, will be treated with the same level of confidentiality. I will further ensure that I store them safely. All material relating to the above project, while in my possession, will only be accessible to the researcher.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Witnessed by: (name of the Researcher)

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Declaration of the Review of the Interview Transcript

Research Project Title: *NGO Theoretical and Practical Approach to NGO Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda: An Analysis of Interactive Perspectives between NGO Peacebuilding and the Local Reality of Peacebuilding*

I (full name).....

Of (address).....

acknowledge that I have read and revised where necessary the transcript of the interview and sent my comments to the researcher. I agree that the information collected could be used for publication as long as anonymity is observed and that my name could only be used at my own request.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Witnessed by: (name of the Researcher).....

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Interview Schedule

Research title: *NGO Theoretical and Practical Approach to NGO Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda: An Analysis of Interactive Perspectives between NGO Peacebuilding and the Local Reality of Peacebuilding*

There are three sections to this schedule: i) Perceptions, Influences (internal and External) and Assessment of Peacebuilding; ii) Extent of the Relevance of International NGO Peacebuilding to Local (NGO) Community Peacebuilding; iii) NGO External/Internal Influence Assessment.

Table 2 International and Local NGOs

The questions below were asked to both international and local NGOs with variation in emphasis. Both category of participants were asked about the levels of collaboration between local and international NGOs; points of convergences and divergences.

No	Questions	Prompts/Instructions	Concepts &Variables

1	What in your opinion constitutes **peace**?	Focus in relation to northern Uganda	General perception of peacebuilding (positive & negative)
2.	In your opinion, what are some of the **indicators** that evidence the presence of peace?	Focus in relation to northern Uganda	Assessment of peacebuilding (positive & negative appreciations)
3.	What are some of the **peacebuilding activities** carried out by your organization? In your opinion, which among the named activities are the most important for peace to last in northern Uganda? Why do you consider them important?	Prompt for examples Encourage to identify one particular activity Probe in relation to values, desired changes	Perception of peacebuilding activities Prioritization of the peacebuilding activities (factors influencing prioritization)
4.	Is peacebuilding the **primary activity** of your organization? *If yes, why?*	Prompt for explanation	Prioritization of the peacebuilding activities (factors influencing prioritization)
5. 6.	What factors, in your assessment, influence your organization's **choice of activities?** Where do you get your **funding**? Is most of the funding from local support or international? *Explain the implication of your choice.* Do you think your peacebuilding activities are sustainable without external funding? *Explain* What are some of the challenges in funding your activities?	Prompt reasons that justify the choices such as: financial constraints; donor directives; needs in the community. Probe for explanation if the participant is willing to talk about this Prompt for explanation; if not sustainable what needs to be done; if sustainable what are the factors behind the sustainability Probe for explanation; discuss the extent to which donors influence	External influence of the choice of peace activities (factors behind external influence) Approach to funding (Internal and external influence) Sustainability of local peacebuilding (factors influencing sustainability)

	What are the major conditions put by your donor agencies for the funding of your activities? What is your relationship with your headquarters in determining your choice of activities and funding?	approaches to peacebuilding	Internal mechanisms of dialogue (determining factors)
7.	How would you assess the conditions of life (**provision of basic needs**) of your participants? Do the concerns for poor living conditions affect your peacebuilding activities? *Explain your answer*	Probe on access to housing, water, food, education Prompt for concrete explanations e.g. relationship between peacebuilding and IGA	Impact of basic needs on peacebuilding (positive and negative impact; factors influencing peacebuilding approach)
8.	Have you heard of the **International Criminal Court's (ICC**) warrant of arrest on LRA leaders? How has the warrant of arrest on LRA leaders affected your peacebuilding activities? *If Yes, give examples*	Probe on the understanding of ICC Prompt for explanation on how it has affected peacebuilding such as increased pessimism; reduced participation; divided opinions	Perception on ICC (positive & negative perceptions) Perception on ICC
9.	What, in your opinion, is the best way forward in addressing this issue (warrant of arrest and impact on peace activities)? What is your opinion on **culturally-based approaches** to reconciliation? *Explain your answer* What are the strengths of culturally-based mechanisms	Probe the way forward for peace in Uganda; how to bridge the divided opinions; Probe on the understanding of cultural approaches and why it is significant or ineffective Prompt for a detailed explanation on the use of culturally-based (e.g. *mato oput*) and ICC approaches to	Perception on culturally-based peacebuilding approaches (positive & negative indicators) Assessment of

	of reconciliation?	peacebuilding	culturally-based approaches to reconciliation
10.	What are its limitations? What other alternative culturally-based peacebuilding practices would you propose? *Why?*	Probe for examples and why?	Perceptions on Juba Peace Talks (positive & negative; influencing indicators)
11.	What is the level of **collaboration** between local and international NGOs? What are the points of convergence between your peacebuilding approaches? What are the points of divergence? What are the challenges of this collaboration? Have you heard of the **Juba Peace Talks**? What impact has the Juba peace talks had on your approach to peacebuilding? *Please explain* What are your hopes over the Talks? What are your concerns?	Probe on concrete examples of collaboration Ask for concrete examples Probe on the levels of collaboration with the local community initiatives for peace Differences in approaches Probe on the understanding of Juba Peace Talks Probe on the reactions of peace participants; increased or reduced pessimism and enthusiasm Prompt for examples	Levels of collaboration Convergence and divergent approaches (determining factors) Challenges of collaboration (determining factors) Perceptions over Juba Peace Talks (influencing factors) Perceptions over Juba Peace Talks (influencing factors)
12.	Do you use a **peace manual** for your peacebuilding activities? Who designed the manual? How was the local community involved in designing the manual? When was the manual first	Use the initial question as a filter for the subsequent question Probe whether the process was internally or	Approach/methodology to peacebuilding (reasons for choice of different methodologies) Internal and external influence (responsible

	published? Were you ever consulted in the writing of the manual? How many times has the manual been revised? How has the local situation of conflict influenced the revision of the manual? In your assessment, what are the major achievements of using the manual? What are the constraints?	externally generated Probe the reasons behind the revision: local needs or external pressure; availability of new funding Prompt on for examples	factors) Local participation (responsible factors) Period of usage (responsible factors) Internal and external influences (responsible factors) Effect of conflict on the manual/peace approaches Assessment of the manual (responsible factors)
13.	In your assessment what are some of the **achievements of NGO peacebuilding**? How do you assess your activities? What hasn't been achieved yet? Which of these (not yet achieved) would you consider undertaking to increase the impact of your work?	Prompt examples: concrete changes; people's perception; new activities for peace Probe on conflict/peace impact assessment mechanisms Probe on the means and the need for the pursuit of the unachieved objectives	Assessment of peacebuilding Assessment of peace interventions (indicators for evaluation) Prioritization and planning (influencing factors)
14.	What are some of the **challenges** that NGOs have faced? Among these, what would you consider to be the major challenge? *Why?*	Prompt for examples: financial; participation; relevance to local needs; basic needs priority Prompt for examples	Constraints on peacebuilding (use prompts)

Table 3 Perceptions on NGO Peacebuilding by Gulu Community Participants

The local community in Gulu were asked the questions below in addition to questions 8-14 above posed to the international and local NGOs

No	**Questions**	**Prompts/Instructions**	**Concepts &Variables**

1	What in your opinion constitutes **peace**?	Focus in relation to northern Uganda	General perception of peacebuilding
2.	In your opinion, what are some of the **indicators** that evidence the presence of peace?	Focus in relation to northern Uganda	Assessment of peacebuilding (indicators)
3.	What would you identify as some of the **peacebuilding activities** carried out by the international NGOs? Which activities would you consider to be the most relevant? *Why?* How long have you participated in these activities? What has been your role?	Prompt for examples Encourage to identity one particular activity Probe in relation to values, desired changes Probe period and frequency Probe on the significance of the role	Perception of peacebuilding activities (influencing factors) (factors determining evaluation of relevance) Participation in NGO peacebuilding
4.	What factors, in your assessment, influence NGOs' **choice of activities?** Do you think NGO activities integrate local approaches to peacebuilding? *Explain your answer* What are the reasons for integration or lack of integration? What is the level of collaboration between your organizations (if any), other NGOs and community?	Prompt reasons that justify the choices such as: financial constraints; donor directives; needs in the community Probe for explanation on the reasons given Examples Probe for access to housing, water, food, education	Perceptions on choice of peace activities (Internal/External influences) Perception on the integration of local peacebuilding approach Assessment of collaboration and joint activities
5.	How would you assess the conditions of life (**provision of basic needs**) of your fellow participants in NGO peacebuilding? Do concerns for food, housing and clothing (good living conditions) affect your participation in NGO peacebuilding activities?	Prompt for clarification on concrete examples, such as: different motivations for participation in peacebuilding workshops; relationship between peacebuilding and income generating activities	Impact of basic needs on peacebuilding (determining factors)

	Please explain your answer In your opinion, to what extent do **donors** influence NGO approaches to peacebuilding?	Probe on explanations	

Table 4 Perceptions of Local Participants in Atiak (no NGO peacebuilding)

The local participants in Atiak were asked the questions below in addition to in addition to questions 8-14 above posed to the international and local NGOs.

No	Questions	Prompt	Variable
1.	What would you generally understand by peace?	Prompt personal/communal understanding	Perception of peacebuilding
2.	What are some of the local initiatives for peace?	Prompt examples	Evidence of peacebuilding activities
3.	How does the local population appreciate these local initiatives?	Prompt for examples	Assessment of peace initiative
4.	Who organizes and sponsors the local initiatives for peace?	Prompt specific references of persons, authorities or organization	Patterns of leadership
5.	In your opinion what are some of the achievements of the local initiatives for peacebuilding? And what hasn't been achieved?	Prompt examples	Assessment of local initiatives

Table 5 Focus Group in Gulu and Atiak: Local Community Participants

The focus groups were asked the question below in addition to questions 8-14 above posed to the international and local NGOs

No	Question	Prompts	Concepts & Variables
1	What are the main peacebuilding NGOs that you are familiar with? What peacebuilding activities of the NGOs have you participated in?	Seek specific examples	Local community perception on NGO peacebuilding (influencing factors)
2	What has been your role in these activities? What would you consider to be the most important peace activity?	Prompt examples	Community participation in NGO peacebuilding
3	In your assessment, what are some of the achievements of the international and local NGO peacebuilding?	Prompt examples of success and reasons	Assessment international NGO peacebuilding
4	What would you have wished to see achieved that has not yet been achieved? What in your opinion are the reasons behind the unachieved desires/hopes?	Prompt personal desire/aspiration	Evaluation NGO peacebuilding
5	Do you think NGOs integrate local peacebuilding practices? *Explain your answer*	Prompt for example such as: working with the elders; use of traditional methods; supporting local initiatives;	Integration of local mechanisms of peacebuilding (influencing factors)
6 7.	In your opinion, what would you identify as outstanding differences between NGO approaches to peacebuilding and your local community? What factors, in your assessment, influence NGOs' **choice of activities?**	Probe explanation on the differences of approaches Prompt reasons that justify the choices such as: financial constraints; donor directives; needs in the community	Difference in perception of peacebuilding approach (influencing factors) Perceptions on choice of peace activities (Internal/External influences)

Table 6 Personal Characteristics

Let me ask you personal questions which you are free to answer or not, although your response would be helpful for statistical purposes of this study.

No.	Question	Prompts	Notes
	What is your current occupation?		Position
3.	Would you mind telling me in which year you were born?		Age
4.	What professional training did you receive?	Check for: -peacebuilding training -other specialized training -levels of university education	Training

About the Interviewee and the Interview

To be filled in by interviewer

1. Name of interviewee
2. Organization
3. Sex
4. Date/time of interview
5. Duration
6. Location

Any comments on the interview situation

Please note any non-verbal reactions such as body movement, irritation, eye contact including interview interruptions as they occur.

Samples of Categories and Themes

Relational context of Conflict

Table 7 Emerging categories/themes

Narratives on the nature and causes of conflict	Historical patterns of marginalization	Conflict dynamics and its impact
Political conflict Polarized social groups Inter-ethnic conflicts Deficit in political governance Displaced persons Militarization of conflicts Institutional leadership Domination	Grievances over Acholi isolation economic and political marginalization of the North North-South divide inequitable distribution of resources inter-ethnic conflicts in the North polarized social groups	cultural identity Confused identities Culture of violence Continuity and discontinuity in culture Transcending violence Cleansing the past Coping mechanisms Reconstructing a common identity

Relational Context of Conflict

Table 8 Properties

Narratives of the nature and causes of conflict	Historical patterns of marginalization	Conflict dynamics and its impact
Poverty Separation Prejudice Power Control Child soldiers Rebel groups	Poor infrastructure Power control prejudice Ethicized politics Intolerance Victims of war Political struggle Liberation war	Revenge Frustration Separated families Desperation Use of rituals Reconciliation

NGO Approaches to Peacebuilding

Table 9 Conflict Resolution Approaches

Interventions at personal level	Inter-personal relational change
Psycho-social support	Reconciliation

Peace education	land dispute resolution
Skill building	education
Remembering	awareness raising
Forgetting	shared identity
Internalization of violence	common future
Change of attitude	common history

Table 10 Properties for Conflict Resolution

Interventions at personal level	**Inter-personal relational change**
Trauma	Reconciliation rites
Emotions	Rituals
Confusion	Union
Fear	Togetherness
Cleansing	Acceptance
Integration	Peace
Acceptance	Hope
Forgiven/forgive	

Table 11 Conflict Transformation Approach

Structural transformation	**Cultural Transformation**
capacity building	Transformation of cultural
basic needs provision	institutional leadership
governance values	Social representation of rituals
recreation of institutions of governance	Socialization of rituals
supporting peace initiatives	Land mediation
political leadership	Conflict mediation
trusted leadership	Cultural institutions of peace
accountability	Accountability in cultural leadership
role of media	Cultural resources

Table 12 Conflict Transformation Properties

Structural Transformation	Cultural Transformation
Reconciliation Training workshops Acceptance Tolerance Accountability Forgiveness relief Unity	Harmony Integration Acceptance Youth change Elders' participation Interest Participation

Local Perceptions of peacebuilding

Table 13 Categories/Themes on Local Perceptions of Peacebuilding

Narratives of Positive Appreciation	Negative Perceptions	Narratives of desired changes in the NGO approach
presence of peace basic needs provision forgetting the past stopping violence peacebuilding unity of community	Invisible gains of peace activities Lack of genuine commitment Donor-driven activities vs. community driven NGO programme implementation vs Local consultation	Do no harm Adoption of lessons learned Strengthening institutional leadership Basic needs provision Recovery from war takes long

Local Perceptions of peacebuilding

Table 14 Properties on Local Perceptions of Peacebuilding

Narratives of Positive appreciation	Negative perceptions	Narratives of desired changes in the NGO approach
Recovery Employment Happiness Reconciliation Collaboration	Dependency Disinterested Evidence Integration Injustice	Unemployment Meaningful rituals Culture Participation Funding

Relational Construction in NGO Peacebuilding

Table 15 Categories/Themes on Relational Construction in NGO Peacebuilding

Narratives of NGO-local community meaning creation	Narratives of NGO-Donor meaning creation	Narratives of convergence/divergence in peacebuilding and tradition
mutual consultation common approach to programme design working together visibility of northern Uganda	sustainability donor perspective NGO perspective Input-output differentiation Power	Memorization of cultural symbols Rituals of peace Socialization of rituals Continuities and discontinuities

Relational Construction in NGO Peacebuilding

Table 16 Properties on Relational Construction in NGO Peacebuilding

Narratives of NGO-local community meaning creation	Narratives of NGO-Donor meaning creation	Narratives of convergence/divergence in peacebuilding and tradition
Appreciation Dialogue Negotiation Understanding Income Collaboration Common objective	master-subject giver-receiver negotiation consultation good results appreciation listened to	values and rituals self-esteem at peace with self being at peace overcoming fear integration and acceptance

Table 17 Interviewee Codes

INGO – International Non-governmental organization

LNGO – Local Non-governmental organization

PO – Programme Officer

PC – Peacebuilding Coordinator

INGO-PC46 – This implies: A Peacebuilding Coordinator of an International Non-governmental organization, interviewee's coded no. 46

LNGO-PC47 – This implies: A Peacebuilding Coordinator of an International Non-governmental organization, interviewee's coded no. 47

CM – Community Member

CM-G – Community Member from Gulu

CM-A – Community Member from Atiak (control population)

CM – G44 – Implies Community Member from Gulu, interview code 44

CM-A62 – Implies Community Member from Atiak, interview code 62

FG – Focus Group

FG – G - Focus Group in Gulu

FG – A – Focus Group in Atiak

UG- Uganda Government

UG-PO Uganda Government Programme Officer - refers to programme officers of the three government institutions for peacebuilding.

LC3 – Local Council 3

LC3 -G29 – Refers to the LC3 for Gulu, coded interview number 29

LC3 – A20 - Refers to the LC3 for Atiak, coded interview number 20

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