



ACHOLI RELIGIOUS LEADERS PEACE INITIATIVE

REPORT OF A REFLECTION WORKSHOP ON THE JUBA PEACE TALKS FOR RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL LEADERS OF ACHOLI SUB REGION



**FROM 10TH TO 12 SEPTEMBER 2008
AT
KER KAL KWARO ACHOLI GULU DISTRICT
FUNDING FROM CONCILIATION RESOURCES**

Introduction:

Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, Ker Kal Kwaro Acholi and Gulu District NGO Forum organized a reflection workshop on the Juba Peace Talks (JPT) from 10th to 12th September 2008 at Ker Kal Kwaro Acholi/ Paramount Chief's Residence Gulu with funding from the Conciliation Resources.

The workshop was organized based on the following objectives:

1. To widen the level of understanding of the Juba Peace Talk documents among the religious and cultural leaders.
2. To identify the roles religious and cultural leaders can play in implementing the different items of the agreements.
3. To chart the way forward for religious and cultural leaders engagements with the communities for coherent knowledge of the agreement.

The objectives were based on the fact that the JPT which began in July 2007 had realized tremendous achievements in terms of agenda items signed and relative peace throughout northern Uganda. Despite the long duration taken to conduct the talks, very few religious, cultural, local government, and civil society organization leaders are aware of what the different agenda items entail. Currently people are focusing on the implementation of the initialed agenda items, therefore a need for different stakeholders to identify the roles they can play, thus the purpose of the workshop exists. The community participation during the talks has also not existed and there has been limited updates by the various delegates and participants. Therefore, it was intended that after this workshop the leaders would engage with the community to help to gain understanding of the agreement at the grassroot level. The workshop attracted 50 participants from the Acholi sub region.

Opening remarks—Archbishop John Baptist Odama (Chairman ARLPI)

Archbishop John Baptist Odama recognized all participants as wise people. He said the meeting was to put wisdom together as we have cultural leaders who are selected by tradition and religious leaders by mission. He urged all the members that as the meeting will be going on, people should listen attentively to the voice of the Government of Uganda (GOU), Lords Resistance Army (LRA), Chief Mediator, as well as the people of Uganda, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Thus the discussion to acquaint ourselves with the peace process should be respected. He urged the participants to work for a unity of purpose and asked participants why we have not received the peace that we need.

He said most conflicts are mostly on two basis: Identity based on questions of who am I? Why am I being ignored? Regarding the sharing of resources; he cited some tribes that broke because of a shade and mushroom.

He said as we focus on reintegration, we may still be in the same problem if cultural and religious leaders do not unify their approach. He said cultural and religious leaders should be for all.

He stated for that him, reintegration should not focus only on the LRA, but that the other people who should also be paid attention are those who were not displaced but surrounded by the displaced people, e.g. the IDP host and other people in the town areas. He urged the participants to bring all people to live together as one humanity. This should be through unity in methodology. He cited differences in approach to ending the war that has existed such as others insisting on military action, mediated dialogue and using the court.

He also called for unity in time frame. For instance, others want time limits given for the peace talks and expiry of those deadlines which create fear of insecurity. He said peace issues require patience.

Official Opening – Deputy Speaker Gulu District Local Government.

The speaker who appeared plastered on the face due to injuries that he sustained due to a motorcycle accident was confident to officially open the workshop. He said he was once in LRA captivity and at that time was more heavily wounded than his current state. He said he questioned himself whether he should come for the workshop but he realized it was a good decision to do so. He thanked all the participants for the love they have for northern Uganda. He reiterated that participants are gathered for a very important task on how to help in implementing the agreed upon agenda items. He questioned as to why we don't start implementation. He urged the participants not only to explore roles but ask the government and donors to start implementing the agenda items. He said the meeting would affect the lives of a million people. He advised the participants that as they explore their roles and that they should put the negotiators close for monitoring and advice. He said the delegates also agreed to a number of things not captured in the document.

He then stated that people have started to embark well in economic activities which need to be strengthened. He said there is need to urge the government that the implementation office should be in northern Uganda. He said the implementation of the JPT agreement should not be confused with the PRDP. He said the issues agreed in Juba are to alleviate the people of northern Uganda. He said both the government of Uganda and the LRA are fighting for victims. He said other people want the implementation office to be in Kampala which to him appears to be a signal for corrupt officials entering into the implementation process. He said as a district, they are proud of the cultural and religious leaders for the roles they are playing.

Over view of the Juba Peace Process – Retired Bishop Mc Baker Ochola (ARLPI CORE Team member).

His overview covered the history of Uganda's political turmoil, the Sudan factor in the northern war, previous peace talks attempts, and the agenda items concluded in the Juba Peace Talks.

He began by saying Uganda's political problems began in 1966 by storming of Lubiri by Dr. Milton Obote. This was followed by overthrow of Obote by Idi Amin in 1979 and his regime that was named as a regime of murder and terror. Obote returned from exile in 1980 and led the country up to 1985 when he was overthrown by Tito Okello Lutwa in May. In February 1986 the National Resistance Army took over Tito's government. The NRA arbitrary killings in northern Uganda led to the emergence of the Lord Resistance Movement due to fear of being killed by the NRA.

The Sudan factor

He professed that all the subsequent Uganda's governments have been supporting the southern Sudanese due to the violation of rights of the southern Sudanese. The NRM like the other governments began supporting the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLA), thus the LRA ran to Sudan and began receiving support against Uganda.

He said in 1994 Betty Bigombe had already completed talks with the LRA, however the president's ultimatum of seven days to the LRA in 1994 while celebrating Pope's Day angered the LRA and led to numerous killings, ambushes, and abductions throughout the region up to 1999.

In 2002, the government led Operation's Iron Fist, causing the LRA to come back causing heavy disaster to the civilian community. The LRA requested the Acholi Religious Leaders peace Initiative (ARLPI) to bridge them with the government of Uganda (GOU). ARLPI went to the president and he accepted. They wrote a letter to the GOU and the LRA. The president instituted the Presidential Peace Team. He said in 2003, they instituted a peace talk meeting with GOU and LRA at Pajule (Koyo Lalogi) Pader District but soldiers who were there bombarded the venue for three days and they were accused by the LRA as being used by government as bait for killing them. They then clarified their position to the LRA.

ARLPI then requested for a third party mediator which included Betty Bigombe, Professor Washington Okumu from Kenya, Mitchel Mandela and St. Egideo of Rome. St. Egideo came to Kampala and went to LRA. The GOU accepted them and their roles however their work is little known. Okumu then came to Uganda but the coordination with the mediation team disappointed the rest. Betty Bigombe then began the peace process and finished the talks within 47 days resulting in the decision of both Sam Kolo and Ruhakana Rugunda to accept that there should be no war. The GOU came up with a memorandum of understanding not seen by LRA and forced them to sign.

In the night of 1st January 2005, the government bombarded the LRA and Kolo was rescued by Betty Bigombe. Then GOU began fighting with LRA till July 2006. Salva Kiir and Riek Machar came to Entebbe and talked to the president of Uganda requesting for dialogue and the president accepted. Since then, there have been no atrocities in Northern

Uganda except in Amuru and Pader where some few atrocities were committed by some unknown people.

The agenda items:

1. Cessation of Hostility (COH) and its addendum, extension and amendment that specifies that the government of Uganda and LRA have accepted to stop fighting between themselves.
2. Comprehensive Solutions (CS) to the problems of northern Uganda e.g. on poverty, education, jobs through stopping the north-south divide and economic imbalance. The government has shown commitment to this item.
3. Accountability and Reconciliation. (AR) This is for both parties to accept responsibility and for uniting the people. He said the item states that there should be fair and just investigations and trials. He said courts accept imprisonment and death but culture does not. He said the truth and reconciliation process is for both LRA and the UPDF so that people can understand the issues regarding the war.
4. Permanent Ceasefire that calls for no more fighting between the LRA and GOU.
5. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. (DDR) This is about removing guns from the LRA and reintegrating people. He called for the local establishment for the implementation office.
6. Agreement on Implementation. He said there is need for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to collect information in order to know what has happened to all for common memory of recent past and other proceedings. He reiterated that implementation is more difficult than the agreement.
7. The last is the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) which is the only one pending.

Recent Developments:

He said they recently travelled to London and Washington. Both the Government of Britain and USA stated that whatever happened in Juba, it considered to be success and that they should help the GOU regarding the implementation of COH, CS, AR should they all begin. They said they may wait to implement disarmament but reintegration should begin. But he expressed his disappointment with the recent blackmail of LRA as a terrorist group by the American Government.

He said where we have reached is a point of no return, that people should return, that there should be no more war between LRA and GOU, and that outside countries should support the JPT. He said reintegration and reconciliation should not focus only on the LRA but everyone. He called for religious and cultural leaders to advocate for the non-use of courts in land issues but through cultural means because it brings peace and harmony. Nobody should support a return to violence. He further stated that the religious leaders are in solidarity with the community and that the JPT should bring peace for us all.

Reactions:

- Government's oppression of people with information that pins them of the wrongs committed during the war. Fear by general community in revealing

the truth relating to the LRA war Suppression from the government side, especially to those survivors that have been victimized by government forces. Prominent during discussions over Agenda Item 3.

Government should accept responsibility because there is no reconciliation without acceptance.

- US and UK pledged to support the implementation of the Agenda Items so why have they blacklisted the LRA as terrorists?

The American declaration is a big wound to the northern people and there should be open criticism to that effect for peace completion of the talk.

- Cultural gap that only performs cleansing of the survivor and does not hold perpetrator accountable. Needs to be inclusive so that needs of victim are analyzed in order to solve the problem fully.

Need for cultural revitalization to hold perpetrators accountable to their actions in order to bring healing to the victims.

- Negative statements by some government officials regarding the Juba Peace Process.

There should be open criticism of those government officials by the cultural and religious leaders.

- Request of unity in role commonality e.g. some religious leaders criticize the practices of cultural leaders as evil.

This is due to ignorance and belief that their religion is priority. But for those whose studied religion. Religion says whatever brings life should be used e.g. Jesus used soil to heal. He continued that religion was introduced in the western perspective, thus some of the religious leaders are still stuck to that.

- Difference in approaching land disputes. Special Police Constables (SPCs) are addressing issues of land matters using the court system while cultural leaders desire to use reconciliatory methods.

Need for uniformity in approach to solving all problems in Acholi sub region. The approaches must be those that unite, not the court that divides. He continued that the SPCs were not instituted by Act of Parliament but by words of the president but urged that under a democratic government, it is only the Act of Parliament must work.

- Presence of land wrangles in the community involving the cultural, religious and political leaders.

Both cultural and religious leaders should organize their houses before they go to clean community's houses.

- Is government of Uganda ready to begin the process of a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC)?

The truth and reconciliation commission is not yet instituted because government focuses more on the ceremony of the final peace agreement as greater than the agreement and the achievements realized now.

- Those who died during the war need to be appeased. Whose responsibility is it to provide a decent burial for those who died during the war?

Cultural leaders who are ordained by god for life of the community, should work hard for appeasing the dead for peaceful return.

- Why can't the cultural leaders bury off the remaining bones of those killed during the war?

The process of appeasement is not mere burial of bones but it has much spiritual attachment of appeasing the dead.

- DRC organizing for war against the LRA. Where is the boundary for the cessation of hostilities?

A clear resolution has to be given to the Congo's government to pardon LRA in this time of the talk.

- Administrative boundaries and homesteads lacking as far as return is concerned.

Need to form a strong committee/taskforce of local leaders to handle land wrangle in the region.

- What should be done to help Kony understand Mato Oput?

Kony should be taught on the principles and processes of mato oput for him to clearly understand mato oput.

Comprehensive Solutions to the Problem of Northern Uganda-Rwot Oryang Lagony (Cultural chief of koc clan of Acholi).

He urged the participants to see what the LRA and GOU have discussed without bringing in our own demands. People need a Martial Plan but the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) is the agreed mechanism for the recovery of northern Uganda. He said the agenda may not be a comprehensive solution to the problem of northern Uganda but there is need to respect the agreement. He urged the participants should not instigate new dialogues. He asked participants on how they can call for implementation yet bring new demands to the table.

He said agenda two specifies the history of the war. The disparities between northern Uganda and the rest. For instance life expectancy of Uganda is 48 years but 44 in northern Uganda. HIV/AIDS spread is six percent yet nine percent in northern Uganda. Poverty rate is 34-38 in Uganda but 68 percent in northern Uganda. Therefore the LRA needs to account for those disparities. He said there is disparity in the area of leadership, rights of people, and poverty. He said the agenda discussion began in August 2006 but

was signed in March 2007. The agenda is meant for LRA affected areas of Acholi, Lango, Teso, and Adjumani only in West Nile.

PRDP is the agreed mechanism for the recovery of affected areas. There should be the development of a private sector, fast tracking system for addressing human rights violations and the return to people's land. He asked the participants whether return is according to clanship of tribehood? He then stated that return should not be along those lines, that instead respect should be given to those formerly settled clans/people and that return should be to previous homes before the war based on customary law but not solely because of ancestral land ownership. He called for the land board to help in the return of people. He said for those whose lands were occupied by camps and barracks, that they can now return to them. However if the GOU expresses need to use the land for public interest, a fair compensation should be provided. He said all land under the areas affected by LRA should not be sold anyhow unless all agree.

He said the agreement also provides for the Equal Opportunity Act. A special institution will be instituted to implement the agreement composing of the GOU and LRA for handling issues. It is also provided for that if people feel as though there is inequality in opportunities, they can go to the commission to register their complaints.

Regarding the rights of LRA, for instance in the dissolution of the LRA, it was agreed that those who meet the qualifications of conscription to the UPDF would be interviewed and given an opportunity to join. He said the agenda was signed on 2nd May 2007 and the Implementation Protocol was signed on 22nd February 2008.

He said it was perceived that the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) would be signed soon in March or April 2008 and that civil society would send a voice of implementing the agreement to the highest office of the GOU. He said the item talked of restoration of life through microfinance, jobs and the private sector. It was also agreed that after signing the FPA, the chief mediator would convene a stakeholder's conference to increase people's understanding of the agreement. He appreciated the organization and funding of the workshop which is a positive response in the implementation of the peace talks.

Reactions and Responses:

- With the failure of the land board to stop land wrangle, whose responsibility is it to strengthen their capacity?
- Should the implementation await the final peace agreement?
With the agreement in place, cultural leaders should begin advocating for voluntary disarmament of children with guns. People should let their sons bring back the guns they have in order to build confidence to the community that there is no more war.
- How do we clarify the difference between the PRDP on the agreement and on the ground?

There is need to take issues to the relevant authorities. We should not brush it off because we would be instigating new dialogue. However, the government should show the difference between the PRDP and other development plans. This is because northern Uganda cannot be taken equally in benefits like the rest of the country which have not suffered. However he gave a clarification that the PRDP is demand driven since there is no basket fund for it.

- Is there any opportunity for implementation?

Yes, in the areas of disparity there is need to resolve on what to be given to the government e.g. government to be asked on items like special scholarship for government to begin offering and methodologies known to people.

- Do people have to return to their parents' home despite increase in number?

There should be principles of return but not rules. The principles should not be unjust to others. The return however would be case to case not completely the same. He said it may be like the customary law on the constitution and Land Act.

He urged the traditional leaders to clean their house in handling land matters and expressed a need for impartiality through knowledge of boundaries and truth. He cited that traditional leaders cannot be judges without knowledge.

One person also said if the voices of the rwodis/chiefs are not heard, there will be problems. Religious leaders should not intervene without the cultural leaders in the community.

The cultural leaders agreed on the dangers associated with land matters and reported that they have instituted and launched a committee that would work on the matter.

A participant also requested for another session to be organized for cultural and religious to understand the plan fully.

Agenda 3: Accountability and Reconciliation by Lino Owor Ogora (Research Officer of Justice and Reconciliation Project of Gulu NGO Forum).

The agreement on accountability and reconciliation is divided into two parts, that is the principle agreement, and its annexure. The principle agreement spells out the benchmarks that will be adhered and kept in mind while developing mechanisms to be used for accountability and reconciliation. The annexure adds flesh to the principle agreement after consultations had been carried out by the LRA and the government of Uganda.

Agenda item 3 has been described as the 'backbone' of the Juba Peace Talks agreement and it took a long time to complete. It was at one point described as the agreement that would 'make or break' the talks. During the design of this agreement the two conflicting yet equally significant issues of accountability and reconciliation had to be reconciled. I shall attempt to look at the agreement in general, and then draw our attention to those

clauses that I feel are of importance to the objectives of this workshop, one of which is to attempt and establish the roles of cultural leaders in the process. Although cultural and religious leaders are not directly mentioned in this agreement, their roles are very important and unavoidable. Who for example will lead communities in the process of reconciliation or in the administration of traditional justice?

The Agreement

The significance of the agreement is spelt out right from the preamble. The preamble recognizes the serious human rights violations which have been committed throughout the conflict and the need to promote sustainable peace. The preamble commits to preventing the culture of impunity and was designed with the intention of meeting the requirements of the Rome Statute. Hence the agreement provides for the use of both formal and informal mechanisms as we shall see later on in my presentation. The agreement is also guided by the constitution of the republic of Uganda which directs that “there shall be established and nurtured institution and procedures for the resolution of conflicts fairly and peacefully and the need to promote reconciliation”.

The following clauses are very significant as far as the roles of traditional and religious leaders are concerned;

Clause 2: Commitment to Accountability and Reconciliation

In clause 2: The Parties commit to accountability and reconciliation. A very significant clause there is clause 2.1 which calls for the pursuing of legal and non – legal mechanisms. We all remember very well the peace versus justice debate and how the ICC was compared to other alternative justice mechanisms such as traditional justice. Clause 2.2 spells out the period under consideration. However we all know that traditional justice and issues to do with reconciliation have no deadline. **Therefore it is our role as religious leaders to ensure that all crimes are accounted for because a crime remains a crime.** Clause 2.3 reminds us that there is a need to come out with the root causes of the conflict. We all know that there have been various claims about the causes of the conflict and speculation of why Joseph Kony has been to the bush. It is therefore our role also as cultural and religious leaders to ensure that when the time comes for reconciliation issues which have caused our people great grievances are put forward for discussion and dealt with.

Clause 3: Principles of General Application

Clause 3.1 empowers the use of Mato Oput and other traditional mechanisms. However it does not spell out the procedures. Although we had a workshop in Juba and tried to come up with some of these procedures, there is still a need to develop concrete procedures that will be followed. E.g. in Juba and in Fairway Hotel we spelt out procedures such as

- Reception
- Cleansing rituals – which mechanisms will be used for which crimes
- Investigations
- Record keeping
- Mediation

It is therefore our role as technocrats in the field of traditional justice to come up with the procedures we feel are appropriate for the successful implementation of traditional justice.

Clause 4: Accountability

Formal criminal processes shall be applied any individual who has committed crimes. However clause 4.1 states that state actors shall be subjected to prosecution under existing mechanisms, while non-state actors shall be subjected to new mechanisms. So the important question that arises here is who will be subjected to the special division of the high court and who will be subjected to local mechanisms? What is clear however is that the majority of the ex-combatants will be handled using non-formal mechanisms. This therefore means we have a role of preparing our local structures on the ground to handle a large influx of returnees. Clause 4.2 calls for independent and impartial investigations and the annexure states that the government shall establish a special investigation unit and the DPP shall be in charge of the investigations. This is an indication that as the government sets up its investigative mechanisms; we as local and cultural leaders on the ground should also prepare to ensure that investigations will be conducted aimed at generating information to back up the traditional courts. Investigations are very critical here because the crimes which have been committed are on a wider scale than those that used to be committed in the past and definitely there may be a lot of denial from ex-combatants.

Clause 5: Legal and Institutional framework

This clause strived to explain that Uganda has institutions capable of addressing crimes and human rights violations committed during the conflict e.g. the Amnesty Commission and the Uganda Human rights Commission. It was suggested that accountability and reconciliation be promoted through these existing national frameworks. In the annexure it is stated that a SDHC shall be established to try those individuals who are most responsible. This special court is already in the process of being established e.g. James Ogoola said that three judges have already been appointed. It will be headed by Justice Akiki Kiiza who is highly experienced after serving in the War Crimes Court of Sierra Leone. The court will be deputized Hon. Justice Mwangusa. The final member of this court will be Lady Justice Nahamia who is currently serving in Sierra Leone but will soon return. **This should act as a wakeup call for traditional and cultural leaders to also put into place structures and frameworks of their own to handle crimes.**

Clause 7: Reconciliation

This clause in a way supports the work of traditional justice processes. It should therefore be a reference point and a pillar that supports the activities of traditional and cultural leaders. Cultural and religious leaders therefore have a role to play in mediating between conflicting parties e.g. in Mucwini Bishop Ochola is playing a big role in mediating between the Pajong and Pubec clans.

Clause 8: Victims

We need to ensure that victims are provided with the reparations that they deserve. **We need to lobby and advocate on behalf of victims many of whom do not have a voice to speak for themselves.** For example up to now some people who live in the Luwero triangle have never been compensated. So we must continue speaking out on behalf of them.

Clause 9 & 13: Reparations, Resources

Reparations will only be meaningful if they are vigilantly followed up. Structures such as memorials, monuments, rehabilitation and compensation can only succeed if cultural leaders are involved. We know where crimes were committed for example and therefore where such structures should be placed. However there is a need to ensure that we hold the government accountable in ensuring that it does not substitute its obligations as reparations. Construction of schools, hospitals and roads for example are the obligations of the government with or without peace and should not be taken as reparations. Reparations should aim at ‘cooling the hearts’ of victims who suffered during the insurgency. *We therefore have a role of advocating for the correct form of reparations and ensuring that it goes to the rightful beneficiaries.*

Clause 10 & 11: Gender, Women and Girls

At the Northern Uganda CSO consultation which took place in 2007, a lady made a comment that during times of conflict “women suffer with their bodies”. Culture has been accused of not adequately catering for the needs of women as Sister Rosalba has stated. However I also wish to point out a reminder that I have always given to people who make such accusations that culture is not easy to amend overnight the way we amend constitutions. Many child mothers who bore children in captivity continue to live in abject poverty and are struggling to make ends meet. So how do we ensure that the needs of women and girls are catered for? The cultural and religious leaders have a role to make this work.

Clause 12: Children

This clause aims at ensuring the rights and protection of children. However we all know how vulnerable the children we are talking about are. Most of them who return are likely to be orphans. Others who were born in captivity will not even have an idea where their roots are or who their kinsmen are. This will increase their vulnerability. Who is supposed to take care of such children? In a consultation we had with CSOs in Northern Uganda in 2007, one of our recommendations on vulnerable children was that: “During reintegration, cultural leaders and institutions should be supported and facilitated by the Government to take responsibility for child mothers and children born in captivity.” This is because there is a belief that in the past orphans and vulnerable children were cared for by the traditional chief. How possible is this? *Religious and cultural leaders have the duty of lobbying to ensure that resources are allocated to activities which support reconciliation.*

Roles of Leaders in Accountability and Reconciliation:

- Religious leaders have been mediating conflicts and need to continue.

- Survivors are not given a voice to speak the truth and need religious leaders to lobby on their behalf.
- Questions persist regarding traditional methods and how they will be employed. Religious and cultural leaders need to come up with a framework of implementation.
- Religious and cultural leaders can put forth a framework that includes the modifications needed for the implementation of Mato Oput.
- Religious and cultural leaders can lobby on behalf of the survivors.

Agenda 5: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR).

By Commissioner Grace Ocitti - Amnesty Commission

Amnesty Commission feel so obliged to be part of this very important workshop. She expressed thanks to the organizers for giving them this opportunity to share with these distinguished participants to talk about Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) which are some of their major functions.

The major objective of the DDR process is to contribute to the security and stability in post-conflict environment so that recovery and development can begin such as what is happening in Northern Uganda and other parts of the country where there have been wars. The DDR of ex-combatants is a complex process with a political, military, security and socio-economic dimensions. It helps to deal with post-conflict security problems that arise when ex-combatants are left without livelihood or support (resettlement packages) during the vital transition period from conflict to peace and development. And through a process of removing weapons from the handles of combatants, taking combatants out of military structures and helping them to integrate socially and economically into the society.

In this regard, DDR process lays ground work for safeguarding and sustaining communities in which individual can live as law-abiding citizens while building national capacity for long term peace, security and development.

Disarmament

This is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunitions, explosive and light and heavy weapons from combatants.

According to the Amnesty Act 2000, any combatant who wishes to surrender should report to the nearest army or police unit, sub-county chief or local council official (LC) a magistrate, religious or cultural leader within the area of reporting. At the time of reporting, the combatant should surrender his/her weapon(s).

Some weapons such as explosive i.e. grenades and landmines are very dangerous so the people such as the religious or cultural leaders, magistrates or even some people from the Amnesty Commission may not be familiar with them. Their roles would then be to contract the military people to handle such items.

The weapons received should be registered and kept safe by the security people but with their particulars forwarded to the Amnesty Commission. Such guns are not supposed to be used again as they are already stained with human blood. They are to be disabled and destroyed (i.e. burnt).

Besides, contacting the military personnel to remove dangerous weapons from combatants the roles of religious and cultural leaders are very crucial as far as the disarmament is concerned, as most combatants tend to trust them more than ordinary people. Rightfully so because of the experiences they have in handling and dealing with the people socially and spiritually. That is why they would confide to high cultural leaders like the Acholi Paramount Chief Rwot Onen Achana II, other chiefs or some trusted elders. In the same wavelength, the combatants can trust their confidentiality with the Archbishop, Bishops Clergies, Sheiks and other people who work for churches or mosques. To them the combatants could mention about some of their weapons which may still be left in the bush. Another role of the religious and cultural leaders in the disarmament would be to counsel those combatants who approach them and may still wish to keep some of their guns in the bush, to surrender all.

Demobilization

It is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatant in the temporary centers to the massing of troops in camps set aside for that purpose.

The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support packages provided to the demobilized persons. This is known as reinsertion.

The reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance given to the ex-combatants and their families. These can include foods clothes, shelter, medical services, short education training and tools.

Again both religious and cultural leaders can play a big role in guiding and counseling the ex-combatants to utilize/put whatever humanitarian assistance they have received into good use.

Other roles religious and cultural leaders can play would be to lobby and mobilize assistance for the demobilized, through churches or mosques, from within or even outside the country.

The cultural leaders can play a similar role, i.e. soliciting assistance from outside Acholi sub-region.

Re-integration

This is a process by which ex-combatants are integrated back into the community.

The Amnesty Commission has been receiving reporters individually or in groups. Before they are re integrated, they are documented by the Amnesty Commission and then handed over to our implementing partners, for example in Gulu we have GUSCO and World Vision, in Kitgum there are KICWA and CPA and in Pader there are CARITAS, World Vision and CCF. In Lira and Apac we also have CARITAS (Teboke) and CPA.

At these reception centers the returnees receive treatment from nearby health units, psychosocial support, and counseling from religious and cultural leaders before they are eventually integrated in to the community, with the standard Amnesty resettlement packages. With large groups of reporters such as those of Taban Amin with 500 ex-combatants with their families and that of General Bamuze with over 2,500 ex-fighters.

The Amnesty Commission was assisted by the Amnesty Working Group which is composed of Donors. As we talk now the Amnesty Commission and the Amnesty Working Group (AWG) are ready. If the JPT is signed the team would swing into action.

The roles of the religious and cultural leaders would be even more crucial if the peace agreement is conducted. They will have to continue forming even stronger bridge between the ex-combatants and the community. Some cultural practices, such as cleansing ceremonies (stepping on an egg) and “Mato Oput” which has almost become a national vocabulary would have to be performed at various level beginning from the home of His Highness Rwot Onen Achana II, other chiefs, down to the elders at village level. Both religious and cultural leaders would also help the combatants in truth telling, paying of compensation (Culu Kwor) and reconciliation “Mato Oput”.

The fatherly roles of religious and cultural leaders would continue for a long time as they counsel both the ex-combatants and the community to live peacefully.

Participants’ reactions and responses.

- There are reporters who have come out without their weapon. What plan has the government have to get those guns out?

It is possible that some of the reporters might have left some of their guns in the bush as the exact numbers of guns they had are not known. The government has been calling on the ex-combatants to hand them over to the authority or members of the community who know about guns being kept illegally to report to the police.

- Since Dr James Obita (LRA negotiator) has embraced Amnesty what is the future of those still in the bush?

The amnesty or forgiveness is asked for so even those still in the bush if they come out and denounced rebellion they will be granted

- What is the future of collaborators?
They can be granted Amnesty if they ask but not packages.
- Why should reporters be given packages? Are they being rewarded?
Packages are not rewards but start up items for people who have been in the bush for a long time.
- Does Amnesty Commission give the same packages to all ranks?
Yes, the Amnesty Commission gives standard packages to all reporters regardless of ranks
- What plan does Amnesty Commission have for couples who have returned from the insurgency?
Amnesty Commission just like any other persons does not recognize marriage by abduction or force. Amnesty resettles ex-combatants back to their families. Couples who wish to continue living as wives and husbands can follow the normal procedures of acquiring wives i.e. with the consent of parents or families.
- Does Amnesty Certificate protect some one when she or he is already integrated into the community for crimes committed there?
NO

Roles Regarding Implementation of Agenda Items-Group Work

The participants were divided into four groups to discuss the roles religious & cultural leaders as well as the community can play in the implementation of the different agenda items. Below are the roles participants identified.

CULTURAL	RELIGIOUS	COMMUNITY
COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS.		
Sensitization on land issues	Sensitization on land issues	Sensitize on peace
Mediation on land issues	Mediation on land issues	Mediation
Receiving and referring returnees	Receiving and referring returnees	Acceptance and referral
Support implementation of some policies	Support implementation of some policies	Monitor implementation
Monitoring implementation process	Monitoring implementation process	To provide support to returnees
Educating the community on the importance of culture	Educating the community on religious rituals	Lobby and advocate for leaders interventions

and cultural rituals		
Cleansing returnees	Counseling	
Counseling community and returnees	Lobbying and advocacy	
Lobbying and advocacy	Information dissemination on land matters	
DDR		
Sensitize community in DDR	Building confidence to community and returnees	Acceptance and Reception
Prepare the community to receive	Spiritual counseling	Referral
Conducting cleansing ceremonies	Advocate for reconciliation and forgiveness	Counseling
Offer protection to returnees	Mediation	Forgiveness
Monitoring implementation of the item	Referral	Dialogue
	Encourage prayers	De stigmatization
		Providing relevant information
TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE		
Clear definition of traditional mechanisms, reconciliation and justice	Building confidence, trust in community and returnees	Active participation and ownership of the peace process (truth telling, memorial services, burial of the dead/appeasement)
Conducting cleansing ceremonies	Evangelism	Acceptance and forgiveness of perpetrators
Sensitization on positive cultural values, JPT and peace	Clear definition of religious mechanisms, reconciliation and justice	Offering voluntary services to survivors/victims
Advocacy for survivors	Conducting cleansing ceremonies	Participate in voluntary disarmament
Mediation on land issues	Sensitization on positive cultural values, JPT and peace	Portraying responsible behaviors e.g. alcoholism
Organize trainings, consultative forums and community dialogue meetings	Advocacy for survivors	
Information dissemination on the JPT, peace and government programs.	Mediation on land issues	
	Organize trainings,	

	consultative forums and community dialogue meetings	
	Information dissemination on the JPT, peace and government programs.	
ACCOUNTABILITY AND RECONCILIATION		
Receiving and cleansing returnees	Spiritual counseling and guidance	Receiving and accepting returnees
Sensitize community on AR	Sensitization of community on AR	Support processes of reconciliation
Offering mediation services	Organizing prayer for reconciliation	Make referrals of the returnees to responsible authorities
Supervise Mato Oput of the different clans	Promote confession for truth telling process	Embrace and participate in prayers and rituals
Promoting cross border and cultural cleansing and reconciliation	Promoting cross border and cultural cleansing and reconciliation	Forgiveness and acceptance
		Participating in cross border dialogues

Closing Remarks-Justice James Ogola, Retired Bishop Mc. Baker Ochola, and Acholi Paramount Chief: Rwot David Onen Acana

In closing, brief statements were made by Justice James Ogola and Retired Bishop Mc Baker Ochola. The meeting was officially closed by the Paramount Chief of Acholi, Rwot David Onen Acana II.

Justice James Ogola

In 1995 constitution brought back the traditional leaders. Justice James Ogola stated that in Acholi, there has been a vindication of the wisdom regarding bringing the system back in place and we should all appreciate the valuable role these leaders are playing in the community.

He compared traditional leadership to that of King David in the Christian bible. David ruled Israel while it was at war and when peace came, he became the greatest King. The hope is that the Paramount Chief will follow in King David's footsteps as he has gone through the fire and has been tested.

He ended by saying that the Judiciary is ready if traditional mechanisms are put into place and a team will be sent to Ker Kal Kwaro Acholi for consultations to finalize the document that will officially employ such a method into the justice system.

Retired Bishop Mc. Baker Ochola (ARLPI CORE Team member)

This is an important moment for the people of Uganda as we all wait for the final signing of the peace agreement. He urged the government of Uganda and the LRA to honor their commitment to the peace talks and put the country first to there is peace for all.

He then gave thanks to the government of Southern Sudan and the Chief Mediator of the peace talks as they have showed the world that peace is possible through dialogue. Accountability is not one-sided and he stated that both the LRA and the UPDF are responsible for their respective actions. He urged the international community needs to support the concluded and signed agreements.

Both cultural and religious leaders need to dedicate themselves to accept the responsibility to take the lead in reconciliation. The recovery plan and traditional systems of reconciliation need to be made known to the people. Bishop Ochola continued by saying that the cultural and religious leaders have been tested like King David for they have seen abductions and witnessed the killing and destruction of the people. God has found you fit to lead the people of Uganda to a lasting and sustainable peace. The challenge is great but God doesn't put anyone in leadership without the courage and strength to lead.

Official Closing-Acholi Paramount Chief: Rwot David Onen Acana

He opened by stating that the Acholi are in a period of transition from war to recovery and mentioned the importance of making friends with people like the King of Libya who has called all the Kings of Africa to work together for peace and unity. He then stated that what comes out of this workshop will be a weapon to the LRA, the government of Uganda and the international community to communicate that this is what the people want.

He then spoke of the relative security which has allowed the people to move either closer or all the way home and this period has many challenges and requires a lot of work to be done. This work needs to be coordinated so we can support the people fully and this time we need to correct our ways of not listening to what the community wants.

He mentioned that not many of us as well as the people who have put the signatures on the document have understood what the agreements say which is why this meeting is so important. What comes out of this meeting will help the common man to understand and digest the information. The meeting will also help us as cultural and religious leaders to know our roles in order to move forward. It is time for us to lead and show our people

what needs to be done by clearly separating what we can and cannot do. What we put down must be turned into actions. He called for the participation of the community as integral. He expressed his concern about the consultations made by the LRA to communities and stated that they were not sufficient for how can only one day cover over 21 years of war?

He then called for the agreements to be implemented despite the lack of the final signatures. Matsanga opposed this at first saying that it would be considered mutiny against the LRA. We need to implement what can be done in order to help the people and this should not be seen in such a way. He stated that Agenda Item 3 on Accountability and Reconciliation is the most important because it deals directly with what has happened to the people. This is what is needed in order for reconciliation to occur. This workshop has clearly shown what we need to do and is an agenda of the people. People need to take the lead and not wait for the government.

He praised the participations of Justice James Ogola in the workshop is of great benefit as there has been a gap between traditional and modern justice systems. There is a need to immediately develop programs for sensitizations and lobby for funds to carry out activities. We therefore need to focus more on community needs and not just on Kony and his signature.

Rwot David Onen Acana then briefed the group about a recent call made to him by Kony on Thursday, September 11th and stated that Kony desires a meeting with the mediator, and both religious and cultural leaders in order to get the peace process back on track. Kony stated that he is committed to the process and is tired of fighting. Kony has called for the religious and cultural leaders as well as civil society to help him. He then apologized for not meeting religious and cultural leaders in May as planned as he had been told that these leaders were moving with snipers and feared his security. Kony acknowledges that people believe he is an obstacle to peace and wanted to speak over Mega FM radio to express that all he wants is to gain an understanding of the role ICC will play after signing. Kony said that signing the final agreement doesn't mean the immediate return of the LRA as they will wait to see what happens first. Rwot David Onen Acana then concluded by stating that on Tuesday, September 16th, a small group of religious and cultural leaders will travel to Juba for as long as there is even a little bit of hope, they will always try to bring long lasting peace.