Exploring Feminist Notions of Peacebuilding: Experiences of Women Activists in Northern Uganda

CANDIDATE: YALIWE CLARKE (CLRYAL001)

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Supervisor: Dr Constance O'Brien
Department of Social Development
University of Cape Town

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University of Cape Town

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was undertaken in Northern Uganda, specifically in the districts of Gulu, Lira, and Kitgum. The researcher spent a total of six months collecting field data (over a period of 2 years) from key members of community-based peacebuilding groups as well as from the groups' beneficiaries. This study conceptualised gender from a decolonial, intersectional framing of femininities which considered lineage, age, class, and geographic location of women who founded peace groups during and just after some of the most volatile periods of the war in Northern Uganda. The researcher theorised how women's small- scale community interventions manifested as part of broader peacebuilding efforts undertaken by larger institutions such as government and international development organisations that were present in Northern Uganda at the time of the study. Based on in-depth interviews with seventeen founders and staff of six community-based peace groups as well as seven focus group discussions with 76 beneficiaries, the study explored shifting gendered subjectivities performed across multiple roles and identities. The data collected was further enhanced by follow-on interviews with seven people who worked with larger aid organisations that interacted with the six community-based peace groups. The researcher reviewed organisational documents such as project reports and minutes of staff meetings to corroborate research participants' narration of their community work. Using thematic analysis, the study deconstructs participants' 'gendered' meanings of peacebuilding. The findings from this study suggest that an African feminist perspective to peacebuilding requires the following: a nuanced intersectional analysis of women's socio-economic and political power within militarised contexts; foregrounding local efforts to build peace by focusing on gendered experiences of survival; a recognition of militarism as a social and economic system that is often intertwined with colonial histories of violence as well as patriarchal values and customs that present masculine power as normative; and finally, unpacking shifts in gendered power, especially with regard to markers of socio-economic and political power.

DECLARATION

I, Yaliwe Clarke, hereby declare that this thesis is my unaided work; and that the assistance I obtained has been only in the form of professional guidance and supervision; and that no part of this thesis has been submitted in the past for a degree at any other university; and that the information used in this thesis has been obtained by me while registered as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Development, at the University of Cape Town.

Signed by candidate

DEDICATION

I especially dedicate this thesis to the women who founded the six community peace groups that were part of this study and all those who participated in the interviews and focus groups.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACORD - Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development

ACRIS - Abducted Child Registration and Information System

ADF - Allied Defence Forces

AGI - African Gender Institute

AIDS - Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

APSA - African Peace and Security Architecture

ARLPI - Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative

AU - African Union

AVSI - Association of Volunteers in International Service

CARE International

CBO – Community-based Organisation

CECORE - Centre for Conflict Resolution

CEDOVIP - Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention

COPA - Coalition for Peace in Africa

CPA Uganda - Concerned Parents Association

CSC - Community Score Card

CSO – Civil Society Organisations

DANIDA - Danish International Development Agency

DDR - Demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration

DRC - Democratic Republic of Congo

FemWise - Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation

FFS - Farmer Field Support

FIDA - Uganda Association of Women Lawyers

FMS - Financial Management Literacy

FRONASA - Front for National Salvation

GAD – Gender and Development

GDNF - Gulu District NGO Forum

GOSS - Government of South Sudan

GoU - Government of Uganda

GUSCO - Gulu Support the Children Organisation

GWPRR- Gulu Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Resettlement

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HSM - Holy Spirit Movement

HSMF - Holy Spirit Mobile Forces

IBEACO - Imperial British East Africa Company

ICC - International Criminal Court

ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross

ICTR - International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda

ICTY - International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia

IDC - International Development Committee of the British House of Commons

IDP - internally displaced people

IRC - International Rescue Committee

Isis-WICCE - Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange

JPC - Justice and Peace Commission

JRP - Justice and Reconciliation Programme

KAR - King's African Rifles

KDLF - Kitgum District Local Government

KICWA - Kitgum Concerned Women's Association

KINGFO - Kitgum NGO Forum

KIWEPI - Kitgum Women Peace Initiative

KOWEPI - Kole Women Peace Initiative

LIGI - Liu Institute for Global Issues

LIWEPI - Lira Women Peace Initiative renamed Women Peace Initiative - Uganda (WOPI-U)

LRA- Lord's Resistance Army

MPI- Meeting Point International

NAWOU - National Association of Women's Organisations in Uganda

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

NRA - National Resistance Army

NRM - National Resistance Movement

NURP 1- Northern Uganda Reconstruction Program

NUSAF - Northern Uganda Social Action Fund

NUWEP - Northern Uganda Women Empowerment Program

OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OHCHR - Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OXFAM - Oxford Committee for Famine Relief

PanWise - Panel of the Wise

PDRP - Peace and Development Reconstruction Plan

PRDP - Peace Recovery and Development Plan

PRDP (WTF) - Peace Recovery and Development Plan Women's Task Force for a Gender Responsive

PSC - African Union's Peace and Security Council

PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

PVP - People's Voice for Peace

RDC - Resident District Commissioner

SUM - Save Uganda Movement

SCORE - Sustainable, Comprehensive Responses

SDGEA - African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality

SGBV - Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

TPDF - Tanzania's People's Defense Forces

TEWPA - Teso Women Peace Activists

UBC - University of British Columbia

UCT - University of Cape Town

UN – United Nations

UNDMT – United Nations Disaster Management Team

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNLA - Uganda National Liberation Army

UNOCHA – United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution

UPDA - Uganda People's Democratic Army

UPDF - Uganda People's Defense Force

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

UWESO - Uganda's Women's Effort to Save the Orphans

UWONET - Uganda Women's Network

VC – Vulnerable Children

VLSA - Village Loan and Savings Association

WAD – Women and Development

WAN - Women's Advocacy Network

WFP – World Food Programme

WID – Women in Development

WIPC - Women's International Peace Centre

WOPI-U - Women's Peace Initiative – Uganda

WTF - Women's Task Force

WUPI-U - Women United for Peace Initiative

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and statement of the problem

'Post-independence' literature on communities in Northern Uganda tends to focus on the context of the war, its historical origins, and current post-conflict reconstruction efforts. There is a limited analysis of womanhood, gender and peacebuilding. Where womanhood is explored, it is mostly from the perspective of disempowerment, articulated in the forms of violence (rape, abduction, forced marriage and so on) meted out against women during and after the war or their exclusion from state-led peace processes. Marginal attention is paid to women's agency and their efforts to survive and confront patriarchy and militarism. This study attempted to fill this research gap by exploring the micro politics of survival and 'gendered' meanings of peace expressed by women who founded peace groups during and just after some of the most difficult periods of the war in Northern Uganda.

For the past thirty- five years (1986 to 2021) Uganda's 'contested peace' (in central Uganda and parts of southern Uganda) has existed alongside armed conflict (in West Nile, Acholi sub-region and Lango subregion). Local populations have suffered extreme violence at the hands of rebel groups, as well as the government military and police forces. Seemingly dichotomous 'gendered' experiences of violence have involved recruitment of (predominantly) boys and men as combatants while those who are raped, sexually abused and/or forcibly married to male soldiers are mostly gendered as women/girls (Isis-WICCE, 2001a; 2001b; 2002; 2008; Temmerman, 2001). This has occurred prior to and during the existence of a government-led Peace, Recovery and Development plan (PRDP). This history of 'contested peace' along with intermittent armed conflict offers the possibility of simultaneously examining theorisations of 'peace' and 'armed conflict' within one national context.

I conducted this study in December 2013 to February 2015, after more than a million people living in atrocious conditions in more than 200 camps for displaced people had returned to their homes. This occurred in the last phases of the implementation of the Ugandan government's efforts to build peace as stated in strategic objective 4 of its Peace, Recovery and Development Plan. The Plan makes specific commitments to peacebuilding as follows:

> A major outcome of the PRDP is to ensure the continuous prevalence of peace in the region. The peacebuilding and reconciliation process requires increased access to information by the population, enhancing counselling services, establishment of

> mechanisms for intra/inter communal and national conflict resolution, strengthening local governance and informal leadership structures and reinforcing the socioeconomic reintegration of ex-combatants. (Uganda Peace Development and Recovery Plan: 2007: viii)

This study also sought to examine the contributions of women peace activists to local peacebuilding processes and how they navigated such a precarious context of militarism and violence.

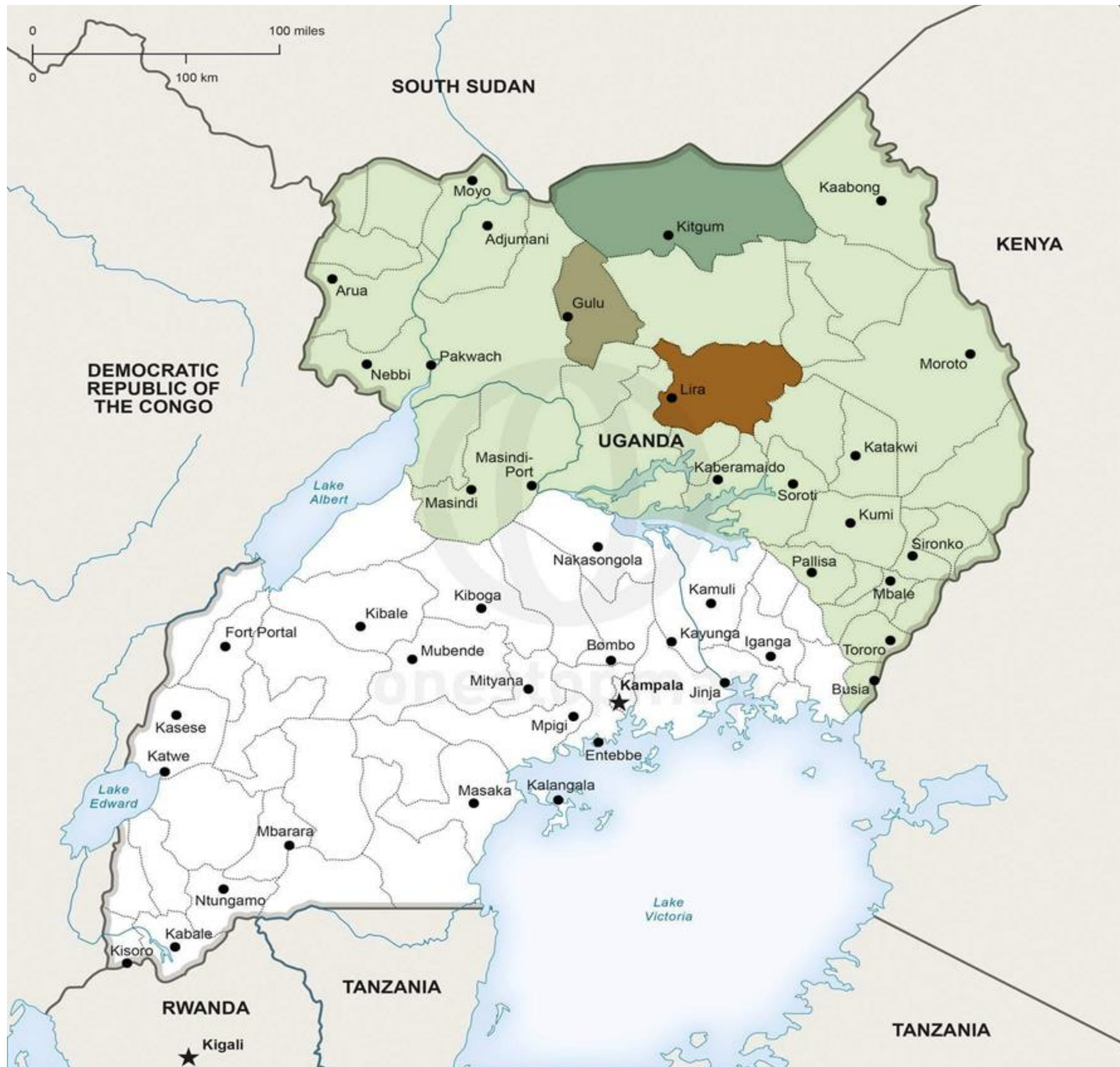
1.2. Research topic

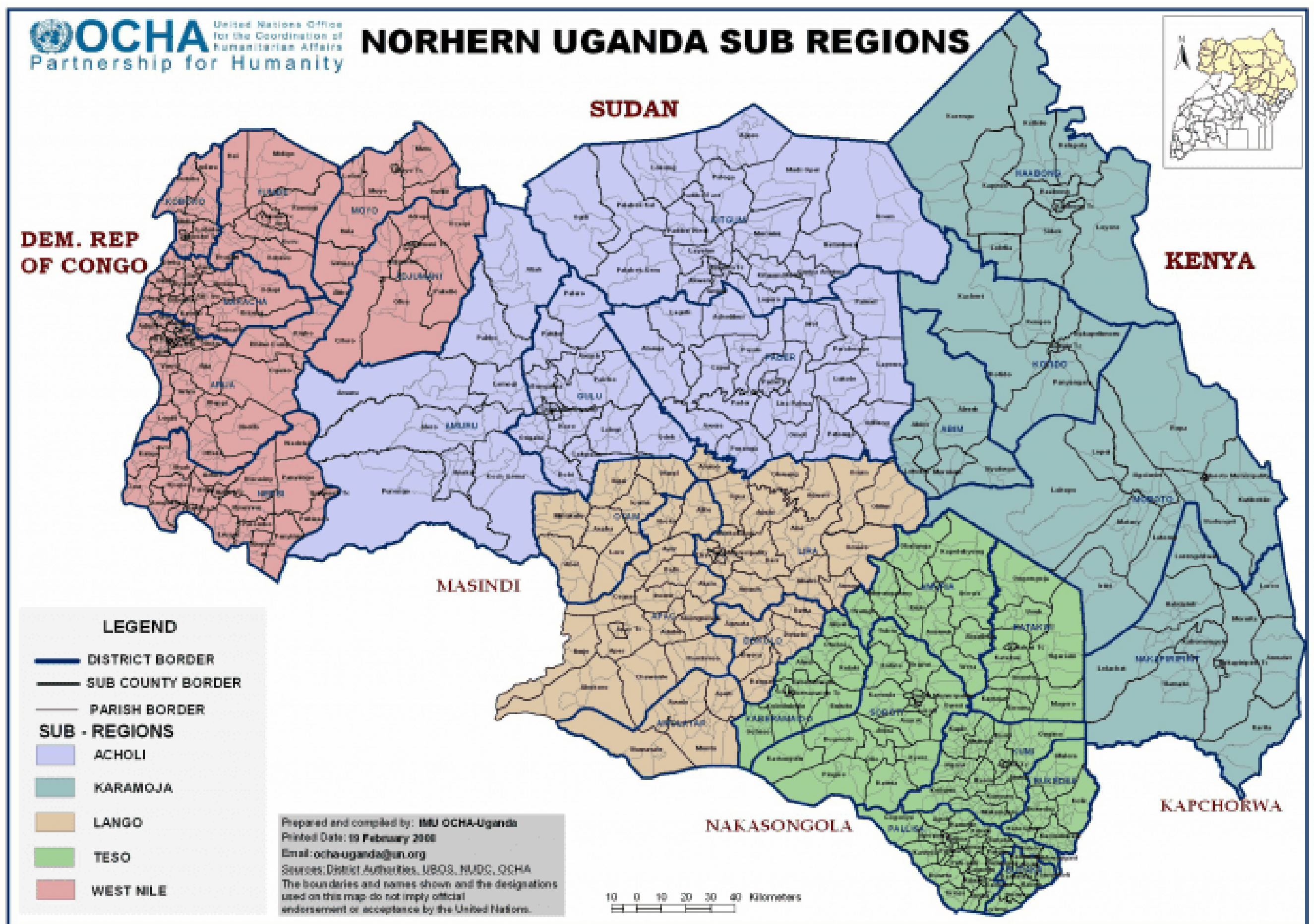
Exploring Feminist Notions of Peacebuilding: Experiences of Women Activists in Northern Uganda

1.3. Research sites

The study was conducted in three towns in Uganda – Lira, Kitgum and Gulu.

Figure 1: Maps showing research sites in Uganda





1.4. Research questions

Amina Mama and Margo Okazawa-Rey (2012:97) state that mainstream discourse and practice about peace pays minimal attention to "…the contradictory ways in which women are affected by the complex relationship between gendered capitalist processes and militarism, and the manner in which women negotiate their lives through both". This thesis examines the activities of six community peace groups in Northern Uganda, a section of their beneficiaries and their gendered meanings of peace. The main research questions were:

1. What particular histories of armed conflict in Uganda have shaped women's ideas about conflict and peacebuilding?
2. How have women experienced armed conflict in Northern Uganda?
3. In which ways did women contribute to a feminist peacebuilding paradigm?
4. What are the various challenges women experience in peacebuilding?

1.5. Research objectives

The research examined the structural challenges faced by particular women in specific contexts in which armed conflict took place. This entailed critical engagement with the theoretical foundations of mainstream peacebuilding discourse and practice of both the Ugandan government and international development organisations that were working in Northern Uganda at the time of the study. The research objectives were:

1. To examine particular histories of armed conflict in Uganda that have shaped women's ideas about conflict and peacebuilding.

2. To investigate how women experienced armed conflict in Northern Uganda.

3. To explore the ways in which women's peacebuilding efforts contributed to a feminist peacebuilding paradigm.

4. To ascertain the various challenges women experience in peacebuilding.

1.6. Rationale and significance of this study

With the passing of the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000, there has been increasing international pressure to include 'women' in formal peace processes. Prior to this resolution, the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 included sections on "violence against women" and "women and armed conflict" (United Nations [UN], 1995: 6). In each section, there is explicit mention of forms of sexual violence that take place during armed conflict such as "…murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy" (UN, 1995: 49). It includes a call for these kinds of violence to be prevented or addressed in broad efforts for peace and security, especially in relation to the rights of women. These international instruments focus on both the prevention of violence against women during war and the importance of including women in efforts to bring about peace. These international policies have created an impetus for a continental and national commitment to ensure women are included in peacebuilding processes and that there is an increased commitment for governments, international development organisations, and non-governmental organisations to make practical and theoretical connections between gender and peace.

Recent prominent UN Resolutions, for example, have particularly focused on the need to address sexual and gender-based violence. So far, seven resolutions focus on the question of

sexual and gender-based violence during conflict. In response to persistent pressure from civil society, the United Nations Security Council has adopted ten resolutions on "Women, Peace and Security". These resolutions are: 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). Prominent amongst these are Resolutions 1820 and 1889 that point to sexual violence as a tactic of war, which needs to be taken into account when framing international strategies addressing women, peace and security. The UN Security Council put in place a special appointment of the first Secretary General's representative on Sexual Violence. These resolutions were a response to high occurrences of 'sexual and gender-based violence' that occur in situations of armed conflict and in 'post' conflict settings (Cheldelin & Eliatamby, 2011: 12-36). A large emerging area of research is one that has focused on a legal analysis of the scale of sexual and gender-based violence in war (Cahn et al., 2012; Dyani, 2007) and has suggested that the gains made in international law were a result of women's activism that demanded explicit mechanisms to address sexual violence during war. El Bushra (2008:132) states that the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 and the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of July 1998, reflect the growth and increasing profile of women and women's organisations working for peace. She states that feminist theoretical positions on peace and conflict are often implicit in the kinds of activities and work that these women's organisations carry out. Through a combination of training workshops aimed at empowering women to understand and engage with state structures as well as advocacy campaigns, these organisations put pressure on governments to fulfil their commitments with regards to women's involvement in peacebuilding efforts at international and national levels. In 1949, for example, after decades of public pressure, the Geneva Convention finally recognised mass rape as a crime against humanity. The International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia (ICTY) established in May 1993 after the war in Eastern Europe, also recognised mass rape as an act of war and a crime against humanity. Similarly, after the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda of November 1994 passed a pioneering judgement in which Akayesu, a protagonist during the genocide, was convicted for mass rape.

Overall, there has been heavy emphasis on the creation of legal frameworks in the form of human rights instruments, protocols, national policies and laws as a way of ensuring that women's realities are taken into consideration in efforts to bring about peace and security. Between 1995 and 2020, there have been an increasing number of African-based women's and

human rights organisations that have influenced these policy commitments. As a result, African states have committed to the African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. UN Resolution 1325 and the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa especially refer to the need to protect women during conflict and the importance of women's involvement in peace processes. This surge in national and international policies necessitates further investigation into what peacebuilding actually entails when policies and practice attempt to take gender seriously.

The influence of international policies on local discourses and organising has recently been researched, especially as it relates to the widespread development of National Action Plans for the implementation of 1325 (Barrow, 2016; Fritz & Gumru, 2009; Miller, Pournik & Swain, 2014; Ortoleva & Knight, 2011; Shepherd, 2016; Swaine, 2009). Much work on Resolution 1325 and the agenda of 'women, peace and security' has 'trickled down' from the global to the local level (Madsen, 2018). However, less has been done to understand how these international norms may have shaped and perhaps even undermined local interpretations of peacebuilding that may be more relevant to local contexts. This thesis has sought to understand local Ugandan interpretations of peace that have centred women's gendered experiences of building peace prior to and after the passing of UN security Resolution 1325.

This international liberal human rights discourse on women, peace and security was preceded by critiques (mainly within political science) of neo-realist interpretations of peace and armed conflict from the early 1990's (Aoláin et al., 2010; Narain, 2014; Reiter, 2015; Sjoberg, 2009,; Steans, 1998; Tickner, 1992a, 1992b, 1997, 2004; Whiteworth, 1994; Zalewski et al., 2008). However, despite this critique within academia, in practice, especially with regard to government initiatives, there has been minimal significant shifts in patriarchal conceptualisations of war, peace and security. For example, Doyle and Ikenberry's comprehensive survey of scholarship on war and peace conducted in 1997 contains six gender-related index entries but devotes only about one-tenth of its space to gender. The words 'women' and 'gender' occasionally show up as a passing note. This scant attention to gender relations of power and their historical colonial histories is also reflected in UN peace processes.

Out of a sample of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011, it was found that only four per cent of signatories, two point four per cent of chief mediators, three point seven per cent of witnesses and nine per cent of negotiators are women (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2012). Between 1992 and 2019, women

constituted, on average, thirteen percent of negotiators, six percent of mediators, and six percent of signatories in major peace processes around the world. While there has been some progress in women's participation, about seven out of every ten peace processes still did not include women mediators or women signatories—the latter indicating that few women participated in leadership roles as negotiators, guarantors, or witnesses (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). More recently, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, women's representation in COVID-19 taskforces is at only 18 per cent (United Nations Security Council, 2020). These low numbers are reflected in Africa's peacebuilding structures. For example, Graca Machel was the first woman in the African Union's mediation team. She was one of three mediators during the Kenyan crisis in 2008. In 2010, the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC), via a decision of the Panel of the Wise, undertook a study on women in armed conflicts. The findings of this study contributed to the creation of a network of African women who were knowledgeable in conflict prevention and mediation – FemWise - Africa (African Union, 2021b; Limo, 2018). In 2017, FemWise-Africa was officially established through a decision of the AU Assembly of Heads of states (AU Summit) and later endorsed by the UN Security Council. The network is located within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise and a network of institutions, mechanisms and actors that are engaged in peacebuilding activities in Africa (referred to as PanWise). Its location within the AU's Peace and Security Architecture places it in a strategic position to influence the formulation of policy and ensure women are part of the AU's mediation teams (African Union, 2021b; Limo, 2018). Despite these efforts, the continued low representation of women in peacebuilding efforts is demonstrative of Olonisakin and Okech's (2011) concern about how African governments continue to struggle to take women's lived realities of (in)security into account.

As a result, there have been renewed commitments from African governments and another surge in women's activism to include women in peacebuilding processes (Limo, 2018). Policies, practices and women's organisations' activities tend to frame womanhood in terms of being helpless victims and/or pawns of war or as being naturally peaceful. For example, a recent (2018) study by the UN that examined 82 formal peace agreements in 42 conflict zones between 1989 and 2011 discovered that where peace agreements included women as signatories, there was an increased likelihood that peace was achieved. In all probability, 'peace' was only seen as an absence of armed warfare. It is likely that there may have been little or no acknowledgement of the centrality and contextual complexities of women's agency

in resisting patriarchal social structures (Ayeira, 2010; Jurasz, 2016). Cockburn (2007) argues that, “The sex – and gender-specific experience of women in war is often neglected, misrepresented or exploited in the media, by politicians, and the anti-war movement’’. Several studies indicate the need to make more clearer conceptual connections between feminism, women, peace and security (Chandler, Fuller & Wang, 2010; Cheldelin & Mutisi, 2016; Confortini, 2010; Hendricks, 2011, 2012, 2015; Hudson et al., 2012; Jauhola, 2016; Olonisakin, Hendricks & Okech, 2015; Sjoberg, 2014, 2013; Sylvester, 2013).

Unfortunately, and perhaps as a result of the patriarchal nature of mainstream peace and security studies, a large part of women’s activism is not considered ‘real’ peacebuilding because it does not fit into narrow government conceptualisations of ‘peace’ and ‘war’. El-Bushra’s (2008) article on ‘Feminism, Gender and Women’s Peace Activism’ explores different versions of feminism that have manifested in the field of peacebuilding. She suggests the need ‘…to adopt a definition of ‘peace’ which encompasses the totality of women’s needs and interests and which puts accent on structural change towards justice and towards greater representation in political decision-making’ (El-Bushra, 2008: 140). She further argues that an essentialist approach to women’s peace activism - that only sees women’s roles in terms of being wives, mothers, and caregivers, or as people who are inherently peaceful and gentle - can undermine efforts to deal with structural causes of patriarchy. Thus, a critical analysis of women’s peace activism can reveal conceptual limitations of narrow definitions of peace, femininity, and patriarchy.

National and international policies on women, peace and security and feminist peace activities tend to present a predominantly liberal feminist discourse that centres the protection of individual rights by sovereign states. This is pitched as important for the possibility of gender equality within peacebuilding efforts. The assumption is that if states and governments adhere to international protocols then ‘gender equality’ within peacebuilding processes will automatically be a ‘given’. This assumption does not take into account the complexities of women’s political subjectivities and the different contexts of militarism and war. Such an ahistorical approach to peacebuilding does not take into account colonial histories, particularly in the global south, that are embedded in the way wars happened and the way in which hetero-patriarchal racist gender relations of power were and continue to be entangled within this history and its post-colonial manifestations.

Liberal feminist discourses on peacebuilding also assume that women's social roles as mothers and caregivers in society make them less likely to be aggressive and active perpetrators of violence. This has been strongly contested by many feminists who recognise that women are not always passive and peaceful (Barry, 2005; Charlesworth, 2008; Pankhurst, 2003, 2012). Cockburn's (2007: 210) study of women peace activists in seven countries interrogates this. She argues that 'it's not necessarily essentialist to deploy motherhood and the propensity to nurture as a significant factor in women's orientation to peace'. Rather, it can serve to unify women across racial, political, or class divides, build solidarity and effectively resist patriarchal systems. Some participants in her study argued that motherhood can be valued from quite diverse angles; from the perspective of patriarchal nationalism or feminist antimilitarism. Several other studies also refer to 'women's peace work' as a means to variously theorise gendered meanings to peace (Barry, 2005; Cheldelin & Eliatamby, 2011; Meintjes et al., 2001; Pankhurst, 2012).

A troubling consequence of a homogenisation of womanhood could be the possible alienation of those women who cannot be easily separated from political, ethnic or class divisions that are part of armed conflicts. Women (in various complex intersections) who may align themselves with certain fighting forces, or take militant forms of resistance to the war, might be 'invisibilised' by this heavy focus on 'peaceful' femininities. Pratt and Richter-Devroe (2011: 498) state that:

> The liberal peacebuilding agenda that is privileged by the UN and gender advocates working at /through the UN represents a limited strategy for those women's movements engaged in a more radical agenda of social and political transformation. Women's 'resistance' to global capitalism and forms of colonialism (rather than peacebuilding per se), for example, is not supported by the 1325 agenda, although women might find their involvement in such initiatives empowering, perhaps even more so than participating in the 1325 gendered peace agenda.

According to Gibbings (2011: 532), a review of UN documents ten years after the passing of 1325 revealed that critiques of militarism, military budgets and military priorities were curtailed and reformulated into positive calls for women's participation and a gender perspective to peace and security. This is a worrying trend given:

> …that African militarism has generated more insecurity than security, often terrorising rather than protecting local populations, dominating the political sphere, blurring the

> boundaries between civilian and military, and thereby undermining all non-military forms of political and institutional authority and accountability (Gibbings, 2011:532).

This Phd sought to address this by examining the complexities of women's peace activism in Northern Uganda in a way that revealed the contradictory ways in which women survived the war. The study gave consideration to their agency within a volatile situation despite the supposed 'post-conflict reconstruction' efforts of the Ugandan government and international development organisations.

By interrogating the work of six community-based women's peace groups in Northern Uganda, this thesis offers some insight into the kinds of activities undertaken and how womanhood and peacebuilding intersect. This thesis also attempts to provide some understanding of the ways in which local women's peacebuilding activities could contribute to both local and global ways of theorising peace. It offers a critique of essentialised notions of womanhood, which still form part of liberal feminist framings of peacebuilding. This thesis thus sought to understand local experiences of militarism and offers a nuanced analysis of women's political subjectivities within and beyond liberal peacebuilding processes.

1.7. Clarification of terms

Activism: This study draws on Barry's (2005) definition of activism as processes in which people engage in various activities that are aimed at addressing a wide range of social issues that arise in contexts of conflict and militarised violence. Such issues include violence against women, legal reform, property rights, the provision of essential services, and political participation. A common element that ties this diverse work together and results in it being described as "activism' is to be found in a particular approach that entails action to achieve an end, either for or against an issue. In this thesis, the word is used to refer to collective action that is taken to advance women's rights as part of a broader aim to achieve peace and social justice.

Women's Rights: 'Women's rights' refers to the freedoms, liberties and opportunities that women have or aspire to have. This understanding is derived from women's actions with regards to organising collectively at local and global levels. Here, 'rights' are interpreted as not limited to individual rights but rather understood as including collective rights that are shaped by complexly interconnected local specificities. 'Women' is understood as a complex gendered

category that comprises people whose agency is often imprecise and unexpected (Grewal, 1999).

Peacebuilding: Peacebuilding is defined as a wide range of processes that are aimed at creating sustainable peace by addressing and preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of violence. It is a long-term and collaborative process, as it involves changes in attitudes, behaviours and norms. This definition draws on Johan Galtung's (1996) transformative approach that construes peacebuilding as a process that enables the transformation of structural and cultural violence. He defines structural violence as a set of systems of social, economic, political and spiritual oppression.

Women Peace activists: Women who have actively engaged in carrying out community peacebuilding initiatives.

Peace Groups: Peace groups in this study refers to local groups of women who have undertaken peacebuilding activities within a neighbourhood or district. Such groups may comprise of a representative selection of persons who try to address specific community problems that have the potential to cause conflict and violence. These groups often collaborate with and build on existing local power structures and processes. The term 'peace groups' includes those groups that have organised themselves into formal community - based organisations.

Gendered Violence: This term refers to the complexity of gender and how this might impact the ways in which we conceive of violence. In this study the term gendered violence is discussed primarily from the perspective of women's gendered experiences of violence and their responses as peace activists. This is only one aspect of gendered violence.

Luo: Research participants that were interviewed identified themselves according to the language they spoke i.e. Luo, and came from Kitgum, Lira and Gulu , mostly from the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups.

1.8. Organisation of thesis

This thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction. The first chapter introduces the research background; rationale for the study; the research sites; the topic; the aims of the study; the research questions and objectives; the rationale and significance of the study; key terms used in the study and the structure of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Conceptualising Feminism and Peace building. The second chapter discusses core theories relating to feminism and peacebuilding that underpin this thesis.

Chapter Three: Gender and Armed Conflict in Uganda. This chapter adopts a feminist critique of war in Northern Uganda and provides insight into gaps in research on feminism and peace, especially as it relates to Uganda's history of how women organised themselves.

Chapter Four: Methodology. This chapter outlines the research methodologies used. It presents a detailed discussion of the research design, sampling paradigm, sampling phases, sample sizes and selection, data collection approaches and instruments, data analysis methods, positionality and self-reflexivity. Additionally, the chapter discusses ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

Chapter Five: Gender Flux, War and Peacebuilding. This chapter discusses women peace activists' experiences of the war and their perspectives on men and women's responses to the war. The chapter also offers a nuanced analysis of the circumstances they faced that led to the establishment of peace groups to assist women and the difficulties they faced in building peace.

Chapter 6: Theorising Peacebuilding – Women Activists' Perspectives. This chapter discusses women peace activists' self-identification as women, and their understanding of peacebuilding gained from their experiences of establishing and running community peacebuilding projects. This includes a description and analysis of their unique contributions to peacebuilding by outlining the kinds of peacebuilding activities they undertook. The chapter also discusses and examines theoretical assumptions about peacebuilding.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations. This chapter concludes the thesis by outlining key elements that need to be considered in developing an African Feminist Peacebuilding Theory and provides some recommendations.

1.9. Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the background and context of the study and presented the research topic, the research sites, research questions and objectives, rationale and significance of the study, clarification of terms used in the study as well the overall structure of the thesis. The following chapter discusses the conceptualisation of an African Feminist approach to peacebuilding.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUALISING AFRICAN FEMINISM AND PEACE BUILDING

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses a decolonial analysis of gender and peacebuilding that informs the study.

2.2. Considering a decolonial feminist conceptualisation of peace

This study's theoretical framework seeks to counter liberal feminist discourses that form part of an entangled global coloniality which is racialised, patriarchal, heteronormative, and eurocentric at its core. In accordance with Heidi Hudson's (2016) critique of liberal peacebuilding, this study's theoretical framework embraces a decolonised interpretation of gender and peacebuilding. This entails what Hudson (2016:6) calls the:

> …formulation of tools or strategies that not only problematise such polarised narratives and relations but also offer ways of constructing more complex and holistic understandings that are reflective of men and women's everyday life experiences as they cooperate with and/or resist global oppressions.

There are three aspects to this, namely an intersectional gender analysis; de-centering of the state; and a nuanced analysis of political subjectivity.

2.3. An intersectional gender analysis

This study uses an intersectional framing of gender to examine a wide range of experiences of 'post-conflict' efforts amongst women who founded peace groups in Northern Uganda. This approach is in line with a long history of contestation expressed by feminists from the 'global south' who have critiqued 'northern' feminists for reinscribing homogenised racist gender stereotypes on complex realities in Africa (Arnfred & Ampofu, 2010; Mama, 1997; Mohanty 1988, 2002). Feminists such as Amadiume (1997) and Oyewumi's (2000) research on the complexities of gender identities amongst the Igbo and the Yoruba have inspired a nuanced conceptualisation of 'gender' as fluid categories that are not only bound by a 'body-centric'

theorization of gender which is rooted in western writings of the 70s and 80s. Despite this critique, a ‘body-centric’ theorisation of gender continues to dominate ideas about gender in development projects, continent-wide. Oyewumi (2000) suggests that in order to avoid ‘western’ interpretations of gender one needs to first be aware of:

> …the assumption and deployment of patriarchy and “women” as universal in many feminist writings…The emergence of patriarchy as a form of social organisation in Western history is a function of the differentiation between male and female bodies, a difference rooted in the visual, a difference that cannot be reduced to biology and that has to be understood as being constituted within particular historical social realities. I am not suggesting that gender categories are necessarily limited to the West, particularly in the contemporary period. Rather, I am suggesting that discussion of social categories should be defined and grounded in the local milieu, rather than based on “universal” findings made in the West (Oyewumi, 1997:15-16).

This study understands that the gender category of ‘woman’ is complex and has been defined by multiple social systems. For African contexts, these include systems that were and continue to be part of colonial hetero-patriarchal militarised capitalist systems (mostly resulting from oppressive encounters involving Europeans, such as the British, French, and Portuguese). These systems have merged with local, differently constructed hetero-patriarchies embedded in genealogies, economic systems of trade and survival, as well as political and spiritual structures of society (Adésínà, 2010; Amadiume, 1997; Bertho, 2017; Charumbira, 2013; Magoqwana, 2018; Nnaemeka, 2004; Nzegwu, 2004; Rasool, 2019). This thesis conceives of Africa’s colonial history as a key framing factor in contemporary violent identities and structures. According to Bennett (2010), African feminist theory characterizes colonialism, violence and becoming gendered as interlinked in a complex way. She understands violence as embedded in gender identity categories created by colonial administrative systems that used phrases such as “our women”, “European women,” “native women”, and “coloured women” which reinforced racist hetero-patriarchal ways of understanding African society. According to Gqola (2001:15) a post-colonial feminist analysis is “...undeniably concerned with subverting colonial and patriarchal systems of logic”.

With this conceptualisation of gender, this thesis sought to “...excavate the silences and pathological appearances of a collective of women assigned as the ‘other’ and produced in gendered, sexualised, wholly racialised discourse” (Mirza, 1997:21). Women who founded community-based peace groups in Northern Uganda, who form the primary subject of analysis

in this study, are a social group within peacebuilding efforts that has been under-theorised and partially homogenised. They are seen as being either particularly vulnerable or inherently motherly and peaceful with minimal attention to the ways in which they navigate, contest or re-inscribe hetero-patriarchy, capitalism and militarism in post war contexts such as Northern Uganda. By focusing on their lives, the study offers 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988: 593) of gendered meanings of armed conflict and peace that seek to subvert colonial and patriarchal systems. As noted by Davis (2008:68), intersectionality refers to the "interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power."

The study's interpretation of a decolonial feminism is informed by a version of 'African Feminism' that pays attention to "...the continent's historical realities of marginalisation, oppression and domination brought by slavery, colonialism, racism, neo-colonialism and globalisation" (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000: 10). This study draws on Heidi Hudson's approach to conceptualising gender and peace. This approach relies on "…decolonising tools as critical intellectual strategies aimed at identifying specific dimensions of the coloniality of peacebuilding epistemology, ontology, and methodology" (Hudson, 2016: 6).

Elements of this approach involve a nuanced approach to gender and sexuality that centres certain women who were actively engaged in peacebuilding. This entails interrogating configurations of inequality along multiple conflicting dimensions. This is done to ascertain the nuanced ways in which femininities are implicated and contested in social efforts to build peace in Northern Uganda. McCall (2005) calls this an inter-categorial intersectional analysis. This form of intersectional analysis "…requires that scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions" (McCall, 2005:1773). The study reveals the various myths about a 'natural' gender order that exist in a context of militarism and 'post-war' as understood by women who spearheaded collective efforts to make life liveable. The study also offers an analysis of masculinities through the experience and perception of these women in a context of social crisis, militarism and war. This nuanced analysis of gender renders visible multiple versions of femininities that are present in peacebuilding efforts in Northern Uganda.

2.4. De-centering of the state

Another element of this study's theoretical framework entails de-centering the state. Instead of centering the state as an institution that yields power in the possibility of building peace in a context of war and instability, the study centres power inherent in gender relations and conceives this power as important governing principles, or idealised qualities. I pay attention to the way individuals are both the product and producers of their social environments, positing a socially constructed individual within a socially constructed matrix of gender relations (Shepherd, 2007). By taking into account everyday gendered experiences, rather than the macro-politics of the state, the study posits a different theorisation of peacebuilding from that found in political science and international relations. Often, formal peacebuilding initiatives are seen as being solely reliant on state or government action as necessary for stabilising a militarised context. Rather than imagine the state as a sovereign entity that contains violence and brings about security, this study seeks to problematise this ontological cohesion in order to reveal alternative versions of authority and subjectivity. This was done by focusing on the everyday lived realities of certain people who have been on the margins of state-led peacebuilding processes. This study centres the collective activities of groups of women who mobilised communities despite the presence of government structures. This required an examination of spaces of power held by these women and their agency in building peace in their communities. Here, the study understands power and agency as a form of 'relational autonomy' where "…there is a recognition that freedom of action is defined and limited by social relationships" (Shepherd, 2009: 211).

This theorisation of agency and power includes an understanding of intersecting systems of oppression peculiar to the historical context of Northern Uganda. These systems have shaped social relationships of certain women who founded the peace groups. The study pays particular attention to Uganda's colonial history that shaped distinct violently gendered, racialised, and ethnicised identities. These identities are worth deconstructing in order to unravel Uganda's complex hetero-patriarchal militarised societies and political governance systems. This is done through examining the narratives of femininities embodied in women who established collective ways of living with and/or resisting various forms of institutionalised militarism in selected parts of Northern Uganda.

2.5. A nuanced analysis of political subjectivity

The study focuses on gendered political subjectivities within efforts to build peace in Northern Uganda. Here, peacebuilding is understood as performative of configurations of the social and political order that are inherently gendered. Adapting Shepherd's (2007) perspective, both violence and efforts to address it in contexts of long histories of militarism and war are conceived of as having an ordering function - not only in the theory and practice of security and the reproduction of the international, but also in the reproduction of gendered subjects (Shepherd, 2007: 250). In conceptualising peacebuilding, I also drew on Foucault's ideas of security that he gave in a lecture titled 'Society Must Be Defended" (1976). According to Evans' (2010: 417) reading of this lecture, Foucault explained security as a performative function in which there is "….sifting of the good and the bad, ensuring things are always in movement, constantly moving around, continually going from one point to another, but in such a way that the inherent dangers of this circulation were cancelled out". Furthermore, Foucault conceived of security as a productive condition of possibility that happens at the level of the everyday, where there is also a power and knowledge of normalisation that is a crucial part of the way in which society is defended. Similarly, peacebuilding could also be understood as a performative function, a condition of possibility occurring at the everyday level in the context of militarism where despite the conflict, livelihoods are being sustained albeit tenuously.

Thinking about peacebuilding in this way allows one to consider the ways in which culture and history shape the specific narratives or discursive practices of peacebuilding. These narratives and practices then produce particular understandings of the notions of violence, gender and power; ultimately enabling the production of gendered political subjects.

As Peterson and Runyan (1999:37) state, "If all experience is gendered then analysis of gender identities is an imperative starting point in the study of political identities and practice." This study examined gendered political subjects that were produced in the context of militarism and war in Northern Uganda. This included an analysis of the kind of political subjects being produced by the discursive practice of peacebuilding.

Discursive practices of peacebuilding are understood to be the linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics of recurring incidents of face-to-face interaction that hold social and cultural significance to women who have been part of community peacebuilding efforts in Northern Uganda. The study theorises the way in which certain women became gendered political subjects in making life liveable in a context of militarism and post war in Northern Uganda.

2.6. Chapter summary

This chapter presented the conceptual framing for an African Feminist approach to peacebuilding. It discusses a decolonial feminist conceptualisation of gender and peacebuilding in relation to three themes, namely, an intersectional gender analysis, de-centering the state and adopting a more nuanced analysis of political subjectivity. The following chapter provides a historical analysis of the war in Uganda and discusses gender, armed conflict and peacebuilding in Uganda.

CHAPTER 3: GENDER, ARMED CONFLICT AND PEACE BUILDING IN UGANDA

3.1. Introduction

This chapter gives a historical analysis of the war in Uganda. It traces the war back to colonial encounters with the British colonial administration. This administration inscribed gendered and ethnicised interpretations of socio-political systems. These interpretations also contributed to the onset and escalation of war and militarism in Northern Uganda. The chapter also provides insight into gaps in research on feminism and peace, especially relating to Uganda's history of women's organising initiatives.

3.2. Reconsidering 'gender' and political power

Uganda's history of armed conflict and militarism offers a unique context through which to investigate and deconstruct patriarchal interpretations of 'war' and 'post-conflict reconstruction' efforts. Existing literature on Uganda's history of political upheaval tends to depict men as key protagonists of instability; as kings, chiefs, British colonial officials, government officials, religious leaders, soldiers, and leaders of political parties and militia groups. Aside from literature about Alice Auma who formed the Holy Spirit Movement (Behrend, 1999) amongst the Acholi (that later evolved into the Lord Resistance Army), there is limited analysis of different gender identities that shaped and were shaped by shifting political contexts in Uganda. One significant context was that of a patriarchal, militarized, constitutional monarchy that was controlled by Buganda leaders and British colonial administrators in the early 1900's. During the colonial period the British signed an agreement in 1900 with the Buganda kingdom that represented one ethnic group – the Baganda. Historical accounts of Uganda argue that its formation as a 'nation-state' evolved around this one ethnic group that gained political and economic control over other ethnic communities and kingdoms (Karugire, 1980; Sathyamurthy: 1986).

There is very limited analysis of gendered identities of Buganda leaders, British administrators, religious leaders, chiefs and leaders of various ethnic communities. Where gender does come up in historical accounts of this period, it is often masculinities that are implied or referred to, with hardly any reference to other genders. Where women are referred to, they are depicted as wives of the colonial administrators, queens, chiefs, or slaves. This is despite the fact that there were many influential women who were part of local kingdoms and institutions that were set up before, during and after British colonial rule. Female power amongst the Baganda, for example, was (and still is to some extent) linked to socio-cultural constructions of masculine-femininities and a version of matrilineal descent amongst male royalty. Gender identities were contingent on biological and socio-cultural constructions that have been increasingly influenced by Christian, colonial, and postcolonial social reforms (Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2009: 368). For example, irrespective of biological sexual features, all members of the royal family of the Buganda (kings, queens, princes, and princesses) are constructed as social men, while the rest of the kingdom are constructed as social women. In addition, "…in Buganda one of the means by which the ruling house secured the loyalty of its subjects was by the rulers marrying into as many clans[1] of their subjects as possible" (Karugire, 1980: 13). This later resulted in the king belonging to the clans of his mother - a version of matrilineal descent of male authority. Thus, by virtue of being either married into or descendent of royalty, there were biological women who held masculine socio-cultural positions of influence and power. Nannyonga-Tamusuza's (2009: 367-80) research on gender fluidity amongst the Baganda uses historical accounts of the Baganda to describe the roles of three groupings of biological women who hold degrees of political influence within Baganda royalty: the *Bambejja* (princesses); *Lubuga* (queen sister); and *Nnamasole* (queen mother). *Bambejja* are referred to as *ssebo* (sir), a title designated to men of high status. Some have taken on roles culturally constructed for men who hold positions of dominance and control. For example, until the reign of Kabaka Suuna II (c1832-56), *bambejja* owned land in their own right (and not through husbands, brothers, or fathers), proposed marriage to men who were not part of the royalty (gendered as feminine – *bakopi* males), paid bride-price, and administered small scale governments in their designated areas (Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2005: 80: Musisi, 1991: 773). A *lubuga* holds the same status as the king. Custom permits her to own land, hold her own court and exercise a

[1] The political organisation of communities in many communities in Uganda revolve around the clan. This is a system in which important decisions in the community are arrived at by consensus amongst elders who represented different clans that constituted the community. The King or Chief acts as a spokesperson for the elders (Atkinson, 2010).

measure of administrative power. However, she was forbidden from marrying and having children in order to limit the influences of an ambitious husband. The *nnamasole* holds the highest social position with access to taxes, ownership of estates, and membership of a court in which she held the position of "king". She also held the power to condemn people to death (Gray, 1935: 261). However, both the *lubuga's and nnamasole's* powers were often more symbolic than practical – "an ideological ritual to enhance the king's (male) power" with less practical influence as compared to the king (Musisi, 1991; Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2009: 372; Schiller, 1990). This literature reveals the existence of varied fluid gendered subjectivities amongst the Baganda that mainstream literature on Uganda's political history does not engage with in its interpretation of political contexts that contributed to militarism and war in post-independent Uganda.

Most of this literature on the Baganda kingdom and female spaces of power (Musisi, 1996; Reid, 2002; Schiller, 1990;) attests to what Musisi refers to as women having "an ambiguous gender position – elevated in some respects, circumscribed in others" (1991: 774). Examples of this can be found in historical accounts of princesses (*bambejja),* Queens Sister's (*lubuga*), and Queen mother's (*namasole).* Until at least the time of Sunna II (ca 1825-56) princesses (*bambejja)* were not allowed to marry or have children. Those who defied convention were forced to abort or their children were secretly passed off as other people's children. When they were allowed to marry and have children, their offspring did not qualify for political office. If the *lubuga* (Queen's sister) was found to have any sexual relationship with another man and/or become pregnant (other than by the king) she would be summarily deposed or put to death (this was at the discretion of the king). Sexual pleasures and pro-creation were circumscribed in order to maintain an elite social class of men who would be born from the wombs of royalty so that they could inherit the throne. The queen mother (*nnamasole*) is not allowed to have sexual relations, bear children or marry another man in the event her husband passes away. Musisi's (1996) account of the life of one queen mother – Irene Drusilla Namaganda's (who lived from 1896 to 1957) in defiance of this rule attests to legal structures that continue to restrict royal women's sexuality in Uganda.

Musisi's (1991) earlier research on women and "elite polygyny" reveals yet another category of women whose social status was integral to the preservation of royalty and political leverage within the Baganda kingdom. Polygynous marriage and procreation were used to gain allegiance and control over those within the kingdom or those outside that had been conquered

through war. "As women became signs and objects of prestige and class, polygamy stratified men. The more wives a man had, the higher his status in the political and social order'' (1991:772). Mutesa I, for instance, married off his sisters and daughters to his chiefs with the intention of winning the confidence of his brothers-in- law but at the same time they had the potential of undermining his authority. Musisi (1991: 776) states that this is how Mutesa "came to terms with his people" after a difficult political period. Clans aspiring to greater political power willingly supplied the king with young girls to marry. In fact, the strongest clans were even obliged to give him their wives. If a man was in disgrace, he would offer a woman to the king in order to obtain forgiveness. Despite being traded in this somewhat derogatory manner, women who attained the status of *bakembuga* (wives of royalty) could undertake roles that gave them certain powers that other women (who were not royalty) did not have. They had the right to collect taxes from specified chiefs or even plunder the possessions of fallen chiefs. They could engage in men's work; they knew state secrets; and they provided the king with a clan, so that favours were distributed to the clan through them (Kiwanika, in Musisi, 1991, 781). This literature points to the use of women's social status to forestall tension between clans or ethnic communities. Marriage was a central way of accomplishing this.

Much less has been written about womanhood and women's political leverage in other ethnic groups in Uganda. Elam's (1973) research on the social and sexual roles of Hima women amongst the Ankole rather points out that women's relative subordinate position is primarily linked to childbearing and the cultural belief that they had to be kept apart from cattle. A wife's contact with cattle was considered dangerous to the cattle and thus a threat to the survival of the clan.

In other literature, there is some reference to spaces of power that women held in a more ad hoc manner - as an exception to the patriarchal norm rather than ingrained in social political systems. For example, according to Karugire (1980:9) in the 17th century, when the king of Bunyoro, Chwa 1, invaded the Ankole and was killed, a woman regent (Masamba) assumed control over the Bunyoro kingdom. Hers was a brief reign, as she was soon murdered and defeated by Chwa's son who took the title of Kyebambe 1.

There is even less research about womanhood and power amongst communities from Northern Uganda – the Acholi, Langi, and Karamoja ethnic groups. Prominent studies of ethnic groups

in Northern Uganda are predominantly about the Acholi.[2] This research tends to provide detailed accounts of the history of the Acholi as an ethnic identity with scant explicit analysis of gender. For example, Atkinson, (2010); Behrend, (1999); Girling, (1960) and Kitching (1912) examine the creation of Acholi as an ethnic identity with unclear roots. According to Girling (in Behrend, 1999: 14), the designation Acholi could have risen from *an-loco-li,* which means 'I am a human being.' They belong to a group of Nilotic-language speakers located in parts of Sudan (southern, northern, and eastern); Uganda, and western Kenya (Atkinson, 2010). It must be noted here that many authors (Atkinson, 2010; Behrend, 1999; Girling 1960; Karugire, 1980) state that the British colonial administration misrepresented and manipulated ethnicity to promote the creation of 'Uganda'. This occurred through a variety of means such as the conversion of local communities to Christianity; the introduction of formal education; and the development of written vernacular languages that included partial and inaccurate accounts of local histories and customs. A combination of migration, merging of clan systems, colonial encroachment and proto-capitalist economic structures contributed to the formation of what now seem like stable ethnicised social categories.

According to Amone and Muura (2014: 241):

> The Acholi are a Lwo people, who migrated to Northern Uganda from Rumbek in South Sudan. Lwo history traverses several ethnicities, states and polities without being confined to any one of them. The Lwo are found in northern and eastern Uganda, South Sudan, western Kenya, eastern Congo, western Ethiopia and northern Tanzania. Today, the Acholi of Uganda are found in the Northern Uganda districts of Gulu, Amuru, Nwoya, Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader and Agago.

These accounts of the Acholi predominantly refer to (patri)lineage, clan systems and livelihood practices. Though gender does come up in descriptions of patrilineal inheritance systems, there is minimal analysis of womanhood and gendered socio-political spaces of power. For example, Girling (1960) and Kitching (1912) (who wrote about Acholi society prior to the strong influence of British colonial governance systems) refer to a well-established agricultural society in which clans were organised around male household heads and based on extended family structures that were shaped largely by patrilineal kinship ties with some aspects of

[2]'Acholi' as an ethnic identity has gone through an on-going process of change and only began to exist as a distinct ethnic group after the 1600s (Atkinson, 2010) .

matrilineage. Women married into their husbands' patrilineage (often geographically far from their natal family) and relied heavily on the goodwill of their husband's patrilineage. Wives were considered a source of labour, therefore the more women a man married, the more descendants he would have, and thus the more labour power he could command, and this would increase his social status. Their study also mentions socio-political power derived from a spiritual realm of rituals and ancestors. "Traditional rituals revolved around appeasing the spirits of those who died in unfortunate circumstances, most of which were connected to a specific lineage or place – a shrine" (Girling, 1960 in Harris 2012: 479). Diviners could be women or men, but, because women married away from their natal family, they could not carry out rites that required proximity to their clans' sacred places. Even though men were considered household and clan heads, the study pointed out that older women had a degree of authority, often only second to that of their husbands. This literature confirms that Acholi clans are mostly patrilineal. However, women can hold power via spiritual practice and age-gender dispositions within their fathers' or husbands' (patri)lineage. Older men retain significant power embedded in material (physical and economic) facets of Acholi society.

Recent research undertaken by Harris (2012: 477) offers a more nuanced analysis of gender-age systems and social change in Northern Uganda. Harris' research suggests that men held "…explicit power as occupiers of the superior position in the gender hierarchy…" while (older) women held implicit power within households and the patrilineage (as mothers, and/or sisters-in-law). Older women's power was derived from both the children and resources they supervised, such as making pots, brewing beer, fishing, and farming tasks, or as diviners. Using Haugaard's (2010) concepts on power, Harris (2012: 477-8) argues that despite being partially eroded by the advent of colonialism and Christian conversion, contemporary societies in Northern Uganda are organised around age and gender categories that still enable older women and young men to sometimes "…acquire a certain element of *power over* without necessarily attaining *power to* act outside the domestic sphere…" She argues that this power is more discursive (than materially practical) and it is restricted to women's age-gender dispositions within their fathers' or husbands' (patri)lineage. In line with Girling (1960) and Kitching's (1912) research, Harris (2012) found that older men retain significant power embedded in material (physical and economic) facets of Acholi society.

There are a few studies on gendered roles amongst the Langi in Northern Uganda. Curley's early (1973) study of the Lango and Nilotic people of Northern Uganda was about ceremonial

activities that take place at the supra-clan level and gives particular attention to the role of women. Curley argued that women's role is a direct outflow of their ambivalent and marginal position in a male oriented society. Their research was concentrated in a single area i.e. Obanya Kura, in Northern Uganda which consists of three neighbourhoods. More recent studies have engaged with gender norms more explicitly. Lundgren et al., (2019)'s research sought to understand how gendered norms and practices amongst Lango and Acholi communities developed during the transitioning from childhood to young adults in Northern Uganda. They emphasised the lived processes of challenging patriarchal gender norms in ways that created safe spaces for reflection and performance of alternative norms. Amone and Arao (2014) sought to gain insight on livelihood options in polygamous family arrangements amongst Langi communities in Northern Uganda. They found that although Christianity and formal education have led to a reduction in the percentage of polygamy in the towns of Lira, Apac, Amolatar, Loro, Kamdini and Dokolo, the practice is still widespread in rural environs. They argue that male chauvinism, labour intensive farming activities and low levels of formal education are responsible for the persistence of polygamy. These studies confirm that across ethnic groups in Northern Uganda, women hold relative subordinate positions in extended families.

McBrien et al.,'s (2015) study offers an explanation of women's experiences of surviving the war in Northern Uganda. Their book titled "In Cold Water: Women and Girls of Lira, Uganda" gives an account of women's horrifying experiences during the period from 1987 to 2007. Although it is a gripping narrative of the ways in which Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army disrupted lives, destroyed settlements, killed, abducted and raped thousands of young women and children, there is minimal explicit engagement with these women's gendered experiences and the ways in which this was part of a patriarchal militarised warfare. Mulumba and Namuggala's (2014) chapter focuses on gendered responses to reintegration in Lira District – an area predominantly populated by the Langi. It assesses women's efforts to contribute to post-conflict reconstruction efforts amidst gender inequalities. Every page is crammed with emotional recollections of women's personal experiences. The findings attest to the crucial nature of agency and social networks as necessary for successful reconstruction through providing empowerment strategies for women returnees.

Apart from this research on Acholi and Langi communities, there is scant literature that deconstructs gendered social systems of power with a focus on women's spheres of influence amongst other ethnic communities in Northern Uganda. This points to the importance of

imagining womanhood beyond that which prominent literature on the political history of war in Uganda provides. This study offers a contemporary exploration of agentic femininities that are expressed through community peacebuilding efforts of selected women in Northern Uganda.

3.3. War in Northern Uganda – Searching for a gender analysis

Several studies have documented Uganda's political struggles from independence (1962) that began with a tense political alliance between the King of Buganda and Milton Obote as Prime Minister. This alliance was a weak attempt at uniting communities in Northern Uganda with those of the south. Kutesa (2006) and Mutibwa (2008) argue that political rivalry stemmed from a breakdown in political allegiance between key state representatives. Their account of political rivalry assumes a fracture in political allegiances and government structures. In 1966, Obote broke with the Buganda Kingdom, relying on the Ugandan army and a particular commander, Idi Amin (Ngoga, 1998). A series of militarised forms of governance ensued, from Idi Amin's military takeover to the current government that was born out of military conquest led by the National Resistance Army that was headed by Yoweri Museveni – the current president of Uganda.

What is lacking in this literature is an analysis of versions of militarism that were partially rooted in violent masculine, ethnicised identities that date back to British colonial governance practices. Branch (2011:45) alludes to this when he refers to the way ethnicities got created during and after the war:

> Of central importance to a political understanding of the conflict is the role of ethnicity, and in particular ethnicized politics and violence. Ethnicity is sometimes recognized as a factor in the conflict by the policy-oriented reports that dominate the literature on Northern Uganda. This literature, however, simply assumes there to be existing long-standing ethnic tensions between northern and southern Uganda, and thus ignores how different ethnic identities were constructed historically and became the bases for collective political identification and action. It tends to naturalize ethnic identities and leave unexamined the question of why war, violence, and politics occur within an ethnic framework in the first place, and how that framework itself might be transcended.

Amone and Murra (2014), as well as Branch (2011) argue that British colonial rule was especially responsible for the construction of ethnicities in all their colonies, including Uganda. This was partly precipitated by the fact that the British colonial administration found it hard to understand a highly decentralised system of governance that existed amongst various communities in what we now call 'Northern Uganda'. There were various Lwo people who traversed several ethnicities, states and polities without being confined to any one of them. In the 1860's "…the Acholi were organised into numerous small chiefdoms, each made up of a number of fenced villages" (Atkinson, 2010: 75). Each chiefdom consisted of patrilineages[3] ranging from one or two to as many as forty, with populations of between a few hundred to over fifteen thousand. Each chiefdom had a hereditary ruler or *rwot* (plural *rwodi*). Even though a *rwot* was central to the political, social, and economic shape of the chiefdom, power was shared with elders who occupied prominent places in the socio-political order. They also shared authority with other *rwodi* – other heads of chiefdoms and heads of lineages within chiefdoms. The Lwo political organisation rested on the belief and practice "…that all important decisions affecting the community could only be arrived at, not by a single person, but by the consensus of the elders representing the different clans constituting that particular chiefdom" (Amone & Muura, 2014: 242).

This system of governance was in direct contrast with that of the British colonial administration which was a centralised system and relied on clear hierarchical structures of governance that were used to control local populations in colonies. In Acholiland, the British ignored the customary mode of succession among *rwodi* and selected their own chiefs, regardless of their relationship to the lineage-based systems. According to Branch (2011: 46) the British built their model of governance on their imagination of how African chiefs should be; that is a 'civilised' governance structure that had centralised power. Their assessment of what was more civilised was based on their intrigue with the Baganda governance system that resonated with versions of the then British monarchy. By appointing their own chiefs in Acholiland, the British aimed to secure British administrative control over the north. This approach partially contributed to the creation of a homogenous ethnic identity that was used to ensure political control. According to Branch (2011: 48):

[3] Note that the words lineages, families, communities, clans, and patriclans have been used interchangeably throughout this thesis. I acknowledge these terms can be interpreted quote variably and there is large body of research on this (Kuper, 1982; Takyi, B.K. & Nii-Amoo Dodoo, F., 2005; Moscona, J., Nunn, N. & Robinson, J.A., 2017, 2020). This thesis does not require an in depth engagement with these terms in order to address research objectives, so the reader will need to note this as they encounter these terms.

> The powers of the British-appointed chiefs were legally formalized in the Native Authority Ordinance of 1919, which made them responsible to the central government while giving them unlimited judicial, legislative, and executive powers over those designated their subjects.

This was a form of militarised and ethnicised rule that depended on a burgeoning male elite comprising of colonial administrators, missionaries, parish priests, and (British appointed) Acholi chiefs. The British used typical methods of subjugation practiced in other protectorates - taxes and forced labour. By 1920, a regular administration had been imposed upon the districts of Gulu and Chua, and the provincial headquarters of Northern Uganda was established at Gulu Town.

As Branch (2011: 52-3) aptly states:

> The national dimension of an Acholi political identity was thus formed in the dynamic relationship between the educated Acholi class and British administrative strategies in the context of processes of state formation in the Uganda Protectorate….[F]rom the beginning, therefore, Acholi political identity had two dimensions: an internal dimension based around competing claims to an authentic tradition and leadership within Acholi society, at first fought between the appointed chiefs and the lineage-based rwodi-moo, elders, and others; and a national dimension, as Acholi represented themselves as Acholi on the national political stage in order to compete in Uganda's tribalized national politics.

These studies point to the fact that most prominent ethnicities in Northern Uganda were heavily shaped by British colonial homogenisation of complex decentralised governance systems. In this process, ethnic identities such as the Acholi and Langi in Northern Uganda were imbued with versions of violent masculinities that had variations of conformity and resistance to British colonial administrative power. Amongst these were networks of Acholi and Langi elites who were mostly men, with a few women who had less public formally recognised spheres of political influence.

Some of these women were active from the time Uganda became a British Protectorate in 1894. They were involved in voluntary women's associations that were started by Christian missionaries and wives of colonial administrators, traders, and businessmen (Tripp, 2000). Formal education for girls was their initial focus. The first girls' school was founded in 1898 by a British missionary woman. The second school was started in 1905 by the Women's Missionaries Conference of the Church Missionary Society (Tripp, 2000: 34). This early investment in education of girls resulted in women entering spaces of influence within churches and then later in the civil service. "By the 1930s, women were sitting with men on church councils and were being elected to Diocesan Educational Boards, and to the Church Synod and various other bodies" (Allen in Tripp, 2000: 34). In fact, the earliest national women's association was the Protestant Mothers Union founded in 1906 in Budo that was established by wives of British missionaries. In 1908, it was opened up to Ugandan women who were wives of male students at King's College in Budo. By 1930 women were represented in all committees of the Native Anglican Church. Another large organisation was the Girl Guides that was formed in 1921 by Foster Smith of the Church Missionary Society. All these groupings and associations contributed to the formation of the Ugandan Women's League in 1938 (Tripp, 2000). Then in 1939, an organisation called the Uganda's Women's Emergency Organisation was formed in response to consequences of the First World War. The Catholic counterpart of the Mothers' Union was then established much later in 1959. Just after the Second World War, there was a further increase in female missionaries and civil servants, especially those who engaged in missionary education or other forms of non-religious based mobilisation (Tripp, 2000). Many of these organisations and groups assisted the Department of Community Development to set up community development clubs in 1946 (Tripp, 2004: 127).

What was characteristic of women's involvement in local politics (compared to men's involvement) was the inclusion of different ethnicities and races (European, Asian, African). Organisations formed after the First World War were especially multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious. For example, the Uganda Women's Council (formed in 1946) was established by "…African, European, and Asian women who wanted to create an organisation made up of women of all ethnicities, races, religious backgrounds, and political affiliations to take up issues of mutual concern" (Brown, 1988: 20 and White, 1973:47 in Tripp, 2004: 143).This was in contrast to political parties that relied on fairly strict 'tribal' demarcations between communities. It is thus likely that the local elite in Northern Uganda mainly consisted of men in chiefdoms and political parties stratified along ethnic lines, with some women

holding leadership positions in political parties, small scale community organisations at council and municipal levels, and in religious-based organisations linked to British missionaries. Their positions straddled different political parties, ethnicities and racial categories. Their leadership positions were often framed by stereotypical notions of domesticity and 'wifehood'. Overall, they were less involved in political parties and policing systems than men. Women interviewed in this study are historically linked to this positioning of feminine political subjectivity.

Colonial labour extraction practices and the formation of colonial armies were also instrumental in shaping ethnicity, class and gendered subjectivities in Northern Uganda. One route through which this occurred was colonial labour practices. Men were used as a primary source of labour for the colonial economy in the south. According to Amone and Murra (2014:249):

> Generally speaking, the British divided the Uganda Protectorate into two, namely a labour zone and a production zone. Governor Geoffrey Archer divided the protectorate into productive and non-productive areas whereby the latter would provide labour for the former. The division was based on presumed 'natural' qualities of the people of north Uganda and those of the south. The people of the north were regarded as strong, muscular, and hardworking while the southern peoples were perceived as weak, lazy but intellectually superior.

There was significant investment in education and infrastructure in the productive zone (south), with little or no such investment in the labour zone (north). This meant that the demand for labour in the south stimulated a flow of migrant labour from Kitgum, Gulu and parts of the West Nile to the central region of Uganda. With hardly any formal education and low literacy in English, they were often employed as casual labourers or low-ranking personnel in government, private companies, the colonial army or in the police. The British colonial administration ensured that migrant labourers were closely monitored so that their 'tribal' origins were not lost. One way they ensured the maintenance of this ethnicisation was through putting specific legislation in place, such as the Vagrancy Ordinance law of 1925. This law ensured that migrant workers who had no work were required to return home to their 'tribe'. This was a deliberate attempt to rigidly ethnicise identity in Uganda.

These processes of control and ethnic compartmentalisation of labour movement ensured that Northern Uganda became little more than a reserve for migrant labour. Military and policing systems further entrenched this trend. According to Timothy Parsons (in Decker, 2014: 29) "…British officers preferred soldiers from groups they judged to possess 'natural' militaristic qualities, and in most cases, the value of the recruit was determined solely by his ethnic origins." In 1941, for example, recruiters of the colonial army - King's African Rifles (KAR)- sent a questionnaire to native commissioners in East Africa asking them to supply names of 'tribes' in their districts that possessed traits such as discipline, steadiness under bombing, stamina and staying power, capacity for hard living, and fighting qualities (Decker, 2014: 29). By then communities in the north already had a history of slave and ivory trade with Egypt and Sudan that involved a combination of mutual agreements backed by military conquest or sporadic raids by militia (Hansen, 1991; Johnson, 1989). This prejudicial assignment of qualities to certain ethnic groups in the north by British colonial administrators may have stemmed from this history of militarised trade in slaves and ivory. Johnson (1989: 73) explains that independent slave armies that were formed by Sudanese merchants often incorporated slave soldiers from the Egyptian army. Sudanese soldiers held out in the Egyptian outposts of Equatoria after the fall of Khartoum until they were recruited by Lugard into the service of the Imperial British East Africa Company in 1891. These soldiers became the forerunners of the Ugandan army. In the twentieth century, descendants of slave soldiers continued to serve in the colonial and post-independence armies of the Sudan and Uganda. Johnson (1989) argues that there are socio-political links between military slavery and the formation of Sudan and Uganda as nation states. In addition, the Acholi and other northern communities were quite tall and easily met the 5'8" height requirement to enter the Ugandan Army. This requirement was set by the British colonial administration (Amone & Murra, 2014: 245).

Decker (2014: 23) also makes historical links between this early period of slave trade in Sudan and military conquest in Northern Uganda. She especially focuses on the role of the British colonial army in grooming Idi Amin. She traces Idi Amin's military history to his father (Amin Andreas Dada) who was recruited into the colonial police force in 1913 and later the King's African Rifles just after World War One broke out. He received an honourable discharge from the army in 1921 and was given a plot in a colonial outpost near Koboko. He later moved to Kampala with Amin's mother – Aisha Chumaru Aate. She was the second wife of four. When Amin Andreas Dada took up a job at the district commissioner's office in Arua, she did not join him. Instead, she lived with relatives in Semuto, a community of former KAR soldiers

near Kampala. Idi Amin was born in 1928 and grew up partly with his father (in Arua) and later with his mother who married other men and lived amongst ex-KAR communities. Her third husband, Corporal Yafesi Yasin, was a clerk in the D Company of the KAR. In 1946, Amin was recruited into the British army and quickly rose in rank due to his success in the battlefield and his reputation for violence and ferocity. One of Amin's former commanding officers, Major Iain Grahame, stated that the success of the army accentuated "…the innate cruelty and ruthlessness of many of Uganda's northern warriors" (Decker, 2014: 25). She argues that Amin's militarised persona was 'created' by British colonial militarism. It was thus no surprise that he became president of Uganda via a violent coup and proceeded to use military power and violence to govern Uganda.

This history of ethnised militarism (in which masculine authority was centred) heavily influenced the political history of Northern Uganda. Over just half a century of economic, social and political marginalisation, communities in Northern Uganda were either despised by southerners as cheap labourers – and called by the name *La paka ca* (an Acholi phrase used to refer to casual work, the Bantu equivalent is *Bapa-kasa*), or they were considered to be naturally attuned to violence and less 'civilised' behaviour. These negative stereotypes, coupled with a feeling of ethnic deprivation amongst northerners, became a potent source of political discontent - a factor that explains the rise in ethnically biased political parties on the eve of Uganda's independence from British colonial rule (Branch, 2011).

Milton Obote aspired to undo the ethnic political fragmentation that had been created by this ethnic compartmentalisation and the differential treatment of districts and kingdoms that occurred during British colonial rule. He sought to undo the Independence Constitution of 1962, which had incorporated districts and kingdoms into Uganda on a fundamentally unequal basis. There were ten federal districts, concentrated in the north and east, and five kingdoms, all in the south. Four of the kingdoms were given some autonomy over their internal affairs, whereas Buganda was given a wide range of exclusive powers. When Obote became Prime Minister in 1962, he disproportionately brought male northerners into the central state, both through the civil service and the military. This had a political effect of creating 'a patronage machine' in Northern Uganda, especially among the northern petty bourgeoisie who were mostly comprised of local chiefs referred to as *rwodi-moo* (many of whom were appointed by British colonial administrators) (Branch, 2011). Unfortunately, Obote did not decentre ethnic identity in the allocation of authority. He left ethnically male dominated structures of power

and alliances intact. As Obote expanded the army he entrenched the northern (male) dominance of the armed forces. By the time Idi Amin took over via military coup, the army had grown from 700 troops at independence to 9,000; one third of whom were Acholi (Okello, 2013: 68). Obote also sought to reduce the presence of the Baganda in national politics by dismantling the monarchy and putting Baganda under martial law. He relied on security forces that were increasingly comprised of Acholi and Langi troops and built an officer corps. Most of the officers were from the north.

During Idi Amin's time as president (1971 to 1978), militarism was further institutionalised with the merging of the government and the army. According to Saul (2004:28), Idi Amin's group within the army systematically killed Acholi and Langi officers because they were suspected of having loyalties to Obote based on tribal grounds. He replaced them with other ethnicities from the north that were from Amin's home region – West Nile.

Apart from the intensification of militarised leadership, a significant difference in Amin's leadership was his harsh treatment of women. During his presidency, women were heavily restricted and controlled by state policing structures. For example, state security structures sought to clear all streets of unmarried women, all of whom were regarded as prostitutes. Government militia attacked women who violated this ban, using rape as part of their terror tactic. Moreover, during this era all independent women's organisations were suppressed (Tripp & Kwesiga, 2002). The government later passed a decree that established the National Council of Women that answered to the Ministry of Community Affairs. This placed all women's organisations under strict state control (Tripp & Kwesiga, 2002: 2).
This reign of terror lasted seven years until Tanzania assisted with an invasion of Uganda and the toppling of Idi Amin between 1978 and 1979. This invasion and overthrow was lead by the following main factions: Tanzania's People's Defense Forces (TPDF); Ki kosi Maalum (a militia group based in Tanzania but loyal to Obote); Front for National Salvation (FRONASA) led by Museveni; and Save Uganda Movement (SUM) led by Akena P'Ojok. After a brief period that involved the establishment of an interim government followed by allegedly rigged elections in 1980, Milton Obote came back to power. Rivalries developed within the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) when "…Acholi soldiers suspected Obote of sacrificing them in a battle (to topple Idi Amin) with no purpose, while filling leadership positions with members of his own ethnic group, the Langi" (Behrend, 1999: 23). His presidency lasted only six months and was probably one of the most fragmented political periods of Uganda's post-

independence history. Under the command of an Acholi, Bazilio Okello, predominantly Acholi soldiers, together with some from the West Nile district and Sudan (who had served under Idi Amin), took over Lira and then later, Kampala in 1985. Tito Okello Lutwa (Obote's army commander) assumed the presidency, though only for six months. This was the first time an Acholi held such a position. UNLA then disintegrated into different fighting groups who divided Kampala amongst themselves and harassed civilians and plundered the city. In the meantime, most of the country was already under the control of Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA). During this time, the capital city, Kampala was divided into different security zones under the state army and temporarily governed by a Military Council that was comprised of different rebel armies (Tumusiime and Bichachi, 2012: 325). During this time rape and the abduction of women by the military was rife. In Luweru, for example, school girls were kidnapped and taken to military barracks (Mulumba, 2002: 113).

Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement between the Okellos (Tito and Bazzilio) and the NRA in December 1985, the NRA marched on Kampala and overthrew Tito Okello Lutwa on 26 January 1986. When thousands of Acholi soldiers fled north to their home villages or to Sudan, Bazzilio planned a military resistance and rebellion in Gulu and Kitgum. The local population were issued with rifles that were taken from barracks by former soldiers. Girls, women, men and boys were part of a military 'front' that slowed the advance of the NRA northward. This included a strengthening of the resistance movement called the Uganda People's Democratic Army, which was largely comprised of former soldiers, most of whom were Acholi. However, by March 1986, the NRA had taken over Gulu and Kitgum marking the last of mass military resistance from the north. This was followed by a series of attacks on communities in the north in the name of disarming soldiers that had fled from Kampala and who had armed local communities to resist the NRA's[4] military and political encroachment. While searching for weapons, some NRA soldiers (who had recently become soldiers for the newly reconstituted Ugandan army) are recorded to have further tortured the community while forcing them into camps for displaced people that were under-resourced and poorly managed (there is more detail on this in section 3.4).

In 1986, following the National Resistance Army military's toppling of Tito Okello Lutwa, Yoweri Museveni was installed as president. Of significance here, is the fact that comparatively

[4] Here it is worth noting that the NRA was later transformed into UPDF. From 1986-1994, it was NRA but with the coming into force of the 1995 Constitution, it became UPDF.

speaking, more women held positions of leadership during Museveni's presidency than during Obote's and Amin's respective presidencies. A commonly made claim is that Museveni made explicit effort to affirm women's involvement in the struggle to gain political power (Ngoga, 1998: 91-106). In contrast to Idi Amin's presidency, during Museveni's presidency, women have held influential positions in the military, government, and civil society. Museveni also allowed independent women's organisations to be established and was instrumental in encouraging the creation of Uganda's first set of gender policies in 1989. The Ugandan Gender Policy established a policy framework for gender quotas to be included in political party structures. In fact, the National Resistance *Movement* (formally referred to as the National Resistance *Army* that overthrew Idi Amin) is known for being the first political party that implemented a fairly successful quota system for women (Tamale, 1999).

So, post 1986, there was a period in which women ascended to influential political positions within militarised political structures of government and also in some rebel groups. In Northern Uganda, for example, one prominent rebel group was founded by a woman, Alice Auma. She founded the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) amongst the Acholi to fight against the NRA. The movement was formed partly in response to the presence of many Acholi soldiers, most of whom were previously government soldiers who returned to their ancestral homeland in the north. These dissatisfied soldiers caused unrest and conflict as they struggled to integrate themselves back into 'normal' agricultural-based livelihoods. According to Behrend (1999:19) the Holy Spirit Movement incorporated many of these 'unemployed' soldiers in an attempt to "…rehabilitate soldiers who had become internal strangers" in their ancestral homes. Auma claimed to be possessed by spirits and one main one was called Lakwena and thus she became known as Alice Lakwena. She was described as leading "…a cult … centred on the healing of individual soldiers and barren women" that waged war against the government, witches and impure soldiers (Behrend, 1998: 107).

The focus on barren women depicts an interesting perspective to gendered norms about spiritual healing that were incorporated into rituals and methods of fighting that Alice Lakwena employed. Lakwena was known to have declared men and women as equal, thus displacing patriarchal hierarchies prominent across ethnic communities in Northern Uganda. In the Holy Spirit Movement, "...men as well as women went into battle, acquired ranks, cooked food, and collected firewood...neither men nor women were allowed to have sex…" Behrend (1998: 112) states that:

> Lakwena argued that chastity guaranteed their equality, as well as their salvation. Later, however, as more and more men joined the movement the women were asked to stop fighting and to resume 'women's duties' as these were defined in the dominant male discourse. Furthermore, while male soldiers in the movement were called *malaika*, angel, the women were named *agaba*, a parasitic creeping plant which in Acholi is also associated with sexual seduction and unlawful sex. Women were held responsible when men soiled their purity by making love.

Intertwined with this somewhat radical and worrying interpretation of gendered spiritual healing was the political aim of regaining what they believed was their lost political influence they once had in the Ugandan government. The movement attempted to unite Acholi, Lango, Teso, and Jopadhola as 'northerners' who had an ethnic and linguistic division from the Bantu communities of the southern parts of Uganda. All these ethnicities also experienced political marginalisation during British colonialism and the early years of Uganda's independence. Based on a form of warfare which combined military techniques and ritual practices, the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces fought many battles with the NRA during the late 1980s. One significant battle occurred near Kampala when they marched towards Kampala with between seven and ten thousand men and women. According to Behrend (1998: 107), "Near Jinja, some 30 miles from Kampala, she (Alice Lakwena) and her soldiers were defeated by government troops, many of them killed or injured." Between 1987 and 1991, remnants of the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces and the Holy Spirit Movement regrouped under the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) commanded by Joseph Kony. This militia group is still in existence today and has received much international recognition for the scale and intensity of violence they enacted. Most of this was in the form of forced recruitment from within communities in northern Uganda, abduction of girls and boys in the north, looting of local communities, as well as mutilation and rape (Allen, 2006). Local populations have suffered extreme violence at the hands of rebel groups, as well asgovernment military and policing forces. Boys and girls have been forcibly conscripted into rebel groups and were trained to shoot and kill while many of the girls are raped, sexually abused and forcibly married to male soldiers (Temmerman, 2001). Torture by government troops took many forms including "…opening up of women's pregnant bellies allegedly to find out the sex of the child, shooting, hanging, mutilation, banging women on stones, burning women using melted jerrycans and other such atrocities" (Mulumba, 2002: 110).

After a long history of militarism and unrest that dates back to British colonialism, it can be argued that relative 'peace' returned to central Uganda under Museveni and some parts of southern Uganda. However:

> ....civil war and insecurity persisted for varying periods of time in the West Nile, the northern districts of Gulu and Kitgum, and some parts of the Apac district. The mid to late 1990s also witnessed rebel insurgency by the Allied Defence Forces (ADF) in Bundibugyo in western Uganda (Mulumba, 2002: 107).

This thesis explores how women who founded peace groups during the height of the war in Northern Uganda have come to understand peace within the framework of their own community-based efforts and their everyday experiences of survival, which were shaped by this complex socio- political context of militarism.

3.4. Women, conflict and peace – feminist possibilities

Despite the presence of these extreme forms of 'gendered' violence that entailed an entrenchment of militarised, ethnicised, masculinities in the state and broader society, there was a simultaneous opening up of space for women's organising and the emergence of political commitments to gender equality. As mentioned earlier, during Yoweri Museveni's presidency there was an expansion of women's activism and organising that was previously violently pushed underground during Idi Amin's presidency. According to Aili Mari Tripp (2000:xiii), "The women's movement in Uganda made an unexpectedly swift and visible entrance on to the political scene shortly after Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement took over in 1986''. She describes the women's movement as a relatively autonomous political force in the country that challenged "...clientelistic (i.e., ethnic and religious) bases of mobilization that have plagued the country since independence". Women's activism and organising around issues of legal rights, peace, education on reproductive health, credit schemes, rights of disabled women, and women's land rights, et cetera, were established and grew exponentially after 1986. According to Mulumba (2002: 113-4):

> Women's involvement in peace efforts in Uganda's most recent history dates back to 1985 when Tito Okello seized power in a coup. At this time the national council of

women organized over 2,000 women to demonstrate on the streets of Kampala for peace and against the mistreatment of women by the military.

In the following years there were several seminars and workshops about building peace in Uganda such as the one held by the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) in conjunction with the Agency for Cooperation and Research (ACORD) who coordinated a peace conference in February 1997 in Kampala. The conference was titled "The Challenges of Peace in Northern Uganda: a Search for Solutions". Other peace and conflict organisations were also founded. The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CECORE, established in 1995) was founded by a Ugandan women who sought creative means to prevent, manage and resolve conflict in the Great Lakes region, including Uganda and the Horn of Africa. These civil society efforts to build peace were numerous and multifaceted and took place prior to and later alongside government-led formal peace negotiation processes[5] that were set up to address the conflict in Northern Uganda.

A prominent woman minister -Betty Bigombe - in government played a key role in getting the peace process started. She was appointed minister of pacification in the north in 1988, and undertook initiatives to end hostilities at different stages of the conflict. When she arrived in Northern Uganda there were at least five different warring factions in the north and north eastern areas and over 2.5 million people had been displaced. At this time, it was also alleged that most of the local populace supported rebel activity (Tamale, 1999: 49). Bigombe's appointment was not taken seriously by the NRM government or the rebel leaders. She was only 33 years old when she was appointed to the position and did not come from any prominent family in Northern Uganda. Even though she was Acholi she married a non-Acholi, from an ethnic community of the west (the same area that Museveni came from) and this was perceived as an insult to the rebel leaders. Her first approach was to undertake a fact-finding tour of the region. She attended local activities and burial ceremonies in order to ascertain the extent of the war and the people involved. It was during this time that she won the trust of a young girl who was abducted by the LRA and was forced to be one of Joseph Kony's wives. This girl was later abandoned when she was eight months pregnant. Bigombe took her into her care providing for her and the baby even after birth. Through this relationship, Bigombe was able to find out more details about the LRA as well as the strengths and weaknesses of Joseph Kony

[5] The peace process entailed both negotiation and reconciliation mechanisms such as the application of Amnesty Law, process of the International Criminal Court, and local reconciliation practices of communities in Northern Uganda.

(Tamale, 1999: 50). In 1989, Bigombe managed to arrange a meeting with one of the rebel leaders in the forest. She held several more conversations with the rebels and went out of her way to go into the bush for face-to-face talks with Joseph Kony (leader of the LRA) about the possibility of fostering peace. According to Tamale (1999: 50), Bigombe stated that:

> I knew I'd won them over the first time I arrived for negotiations. I had been communicating with them via radio and all the time they thought I was bluffing about meeting them…they were shocked to see that a woman had survived the tough journey which sent the message that I was very serious... During these negotiations I exercised a great deal of patience and did a lot of listening. At first, they were very cautious but on subsequent meetings one by one, they started pouring out their grievances while I listened. There were lots of insults toward me and towards NRM government, but never once did I lose my temper or bang tables…I graduated from being a 'girl' to being a 'woman' until eventually everybody started referring to me as 'mother'. It signified trust and respect, for they knew that a mother would never harm her child.

In the end, her position as a woman proved useful because she was often seen as non-threatening as a political leader.

> She defied the prejudices associated with womanhood while embracing its positive attributes. She fought the discrimination of an institution that is traditionally male, and successfully played the role of non-military negotiator – normally the preserve of commissioned military men or seasoned male actors (Tamale, 1999: 50-1).

As a result of these efforts, in 2004, the International Criminal Court (ICC) withheld releasing indictments against the LRA to allow a new peace initiative, spearheaded by former Minister Betty Bigombe. When these talks collapsed in early 2005 and failed to be revived over the course of the next six months, the ICC publicly indicted five LRA commanders in October 2005. Bigombe, who was wary of the potential impact of the ICC investigation on her mediation efforts, was disappointed and frustrated: 'They should have taken more time to study the situation and understand it fully … It would not have cost them much to wait for two years to give this process a chance' (Tamale, 1999: 50).

By May 2006, a new peace process was initiated by the vice-president of South Sudan, Riek Machar, refuelling local perceptions that the International Criminal Court's intervention was ill-timed and inappropriate. The government of South Sudan was interested in ending the war in Northern Uganda and ending abductions and massacres by the LRA in its own territory.

They believed that this would help stabilize their own fledgling peace agreement in South Sudan. After a series of processes that aimed at building the LRA's confidence in the peace process, Machar was able to convince president Museveni that another round of peace talks were possible. The official meetings and negotiations that took place in Juba (later known as the 'Juba talks' between the Government of Uganda, GoU) and the LRA took place in Juba, in southern Sudan, with the support of the Government of South Sudan (GOSS). However, the process came to a stalemate in late 2008.

Two years earlier, in 2006, women's organisations formed a coalition aimed at ensuring that women's perspectives and demands were taken into consideration during the talks. This process was called the 'Juba Peace Caravan'. According to Musoke (2012: 12):

> In November 2007, the coalition ran the Women's Peace Caravan through the districts of Kampala, Luweru, Masindi, Gulu, Kitgum and Kona Kamdini (the meeting point for women peace groups from Teso, Lira, Pader and Kasese). With over 100 women and activists at the start of the journey, the caravan aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing Ugandans to support the peace process and to strengthen solidarity with the communities of north Uganda over the suffering that they had endured at the hands of the warring parties.

Some women were active in influencing the peace talks via their involvement in religious groups. This included the Catholic dioceses which set up peace and justice commissions at parish level and an inter-religious group called the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative. According to Dolan (2009: 48-9):

> The formation of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) in May 1998 brought Catholics, Anglicans and Muslims from Gulu and Kitgum districts together under one umbrella. The inaugural meeting name *Bedo Piny pi Kuc* ('Let us sit down for peace'), signalled a commitment to a negotiated solution and was attended by amongst others, the Resident Representative of the World Bank and UNDP, the Minister of state for Northern Uganda, and the UPDF's 4th Division commander. ARLPI's membership was subsequently expanded to include religious leaders from throughout Northern Uganda, and over the following years they became increasingly critical players in the anti-war camp.

Studies done on women's participation in government-led peace talks reveal that their involvement was once again marginalised (Apio-Julu, 2004; Atim, 2008; Ocheri, 2011; Okot,

2010). According to Selle (2008:3), in 2008 the government negotiation team, that was led by Dr Ruhakan Rugunda the then Minister of Internal Affairs in Uganda, consisted of men, with one or two women members of parliament who acted as observers of the process. In addition, there were only two women amongst LRA representatives. Both held minimal roles.

According to Okot's (2010: 43-6) research on women and peacebuilding in Gulu district, women tended to be involved in traditional peacebuilding at clan level, and not at in the formal government-led peace processes. This involved meal preparations, providing traditional beers, as well as singing and dancing. These tended to be closely linked with locally framed traditional feminine roles. Some elderly women gave words of wisdom in settling disputes and blessing to the 'returnees" or 'ex-rebels' (Apio-Julu, 2004; Atim 2008; Selle, 2008). Other women's groups were formed in response to immediate livelihood needs that were caused by armed conflict (Ball, 2009). For example, as a response to an increase in widows and orphans, the National Association of Women's Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU) started a childcare centre and assisted in the resettlement of women ex-prisoners of war. Uganda's Women's Effort to Save the Orphans (UWESO) addressed the needs of children orphaned by the war. UWESO, began in the Luweru district, is still working in up to 36 districts in Uganda. There were many other efforts, many of which were spearheaded by groups of women who later formed community based organisations. For example, a woman activist from Gulu indicated that in 1989 the Gulu District Women's Development Committee mobilised women to take part in a peaceful demonstration against the war. They also reported violations by soldiers, and took part in Local Council committees in a bid to influence civil-military relations that were being put in place by the Resident District Commissioner. They engaged in a wide range of activities that included working with local cultural institutions to prepare communities for reconciliation and re-integration (Oywa, 2002: 61). Another example is that of the efforts of Rosalba Oywa who, in 1995, formed a group called People's Voice for Peace (PVP), which supported community reintegration of formerly abducted children and advocated for the inclusion of those experiencing the violence first hand, especially women. At the time of founding PVP, Rosalba Oywa had been the Programme Director for the Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development in Gulu, and Regional Coordinator for the Coalition for Peace in Africa, overseeing its activities in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Sudan. As a result of her efforts in Northern Uganda, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 (Oywa, 2002).

Another prominent organization founded by women was the Concerned Parents Association. It was founded after 152 girls were abducted from St Mary's School in Aboke (Temmerman, 2001). The Deputy Headmistress of Aboke Secondary School - Sister Rachele Fassera initiated a high-profile advocacy campaign that received attention worldwide and influenced the agenda in negotiations around the conflict. The strategy for the release of the 'Aboke girls' has had some criticism, as the thousands of children abducted before 1997 received no such attention.

The work of the Women's International Peace Centre – WIPC (that was previously called Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange, Isis-WICCE)[6] offered an interesting angle to peacebuilding efforts of certain women in Northern Uganda (Isis-WICCE, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Since the early 1990s, they have come to be internationally known for mentoring women leaders and women's groups in undertaking community level efforts that contribute to peacebuilding and conflict transformation . This entailed a period in which they had a particular focus on healing 'women war survivors' by addressing their psychological, physical and gynaecological needs. Their more recent work has involved advocating for a 'gender-responsive post-conflict recovery' in 27 countries across the world (Isis-WICCE, 2008).

Studies undertaken by Isis-WICCE (2001a, 2001b; 2002a, 2002b, 2006a, 2008) and Liebling et. al (2008) on the war in Northern Uganda revealed the occurrence of extreme levels of sexual violence against women, with most women experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Almost all survivors of sexual violence suffered from depression, anxiety disorders and chronic pain. It was evident that these women found it difficult to cope with daily tasks. They lacked motivation to engage in commercially gainful activities, even to feed their families who depended on them. They were haunted by disturbing intrusive thoughts, and painful emotions of the war. Apart from actually providing reproductive health services to hundreds of women who experienced sexual violence during the war, Isis-WICCE's research process enabled research participants to form self-help groups[7] as a way of building local networks of

[6] Isis-WICCE was initially based in Europe despite the face that it was named after an Egyptian goddess of wisdom and justice – 'Isis'. Since the mid 1990's, Isis-WICCE's activities shifted from a broad interest in advancing gender equality to a particular interest in women's involvement in peacebuilding. When the office moved from Europe to Uganda in 1994, they shifted their focus to organising 'cross cultural exchanges' for women who lived in places that had undergone militarised conflict. These exchanges inspired the organisation's involvement in documenting women's experiences of living in militarised contexts (Women International Peace Centre, 2021).

[7] Five groups have been established in Northern Uganda: Gulu Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Resettlement (GWPRR); Kole Women Peace Initiative (KOWEPI); Lira Women Peace Initiative renamed

support and trust that proved central for women's individual and collective healing as well as enabling their involvement in local peace building efforts (Chigudu, 2016; Ochieng, 2008). Based on research findings and women's direct involvement in influencing government-led responses to the war, Isis-WICCE has made significant contributions to the government's Peace and Development Reconstruction Plan (PDRP). For example, in March 2009, Isis-WICCE was instrumental in founding a Women's Task Force (WTF) that prioritised 'gender' issues were addressed in any further peacebuilding efforts in Northern Uganda. The WTF includes ten women's organisations from North and North Eastern Uganda (West Nile, Acholi, Lango, Teso and Karamoja sub regions) and eleven national women's organisations with interventions in Northern Uganda (Isis-WICCE, 2008).

The wide range of activities undertaken by WIPC to build peace in Northern Uganda is yet to be fully understood. Oosterom's (2011) article attempts to do this by discussing perceptions and practices of citizenship by Acholi women in the post-conflict situations of the Acholi region in Northern Uganda. She highlights interesting intersections between gender, conflict and citizenship. However, there is still much to be understood about what these intersections are. This thesis hopes to build on Oosterom's work by offering some insight into what versions of political subjectivity were performed by these women as they navigated complex contexts of militarism and post-conflict recovery..

3.5. The gendered politics of displacement, amnesty and humanitarian aid

Alongside formal peace talks and the implementation of the Peace, Recovery Development Plan (PRDP), women's peace efforts were heavily influenced by mass displacement; amnesty for those implicated in rebel activity; and the presence of international humanitarian and development agencies who spent large amounts of money in Northern Uganda.

In late 1996, the Ugandan government set up what they called 'protected villages' for the civilian population in the northern part of the country. These were located in trading hubs where there was already a history of local economic activity. The government argued that these 'protected villages' were meant to provide the civilian population protection from looting,

Women United for Peace Initiative (WUPI-U); Kitgum Women Peace Initiative (KIWEPI); and Teso Women Peace Activists (TEWPA).

abduction, violence and killing at the hands of rebel groups. The government put ultimatums on people to move into these villages so that they could also avoid being mistaken as rebels or rebel collaborators and then being attacked by the Ugandan army. The ultimatums were experienced as a threat rather than a genuine offer to protect civilian populations. Many people moved into the camps involuntarily. They moved from widely scattered small villages "…into much larger aggregates ranging from a few thousands up to tens of thousands" (Dolan, 2009: 46-7). The villages functioned like camps for internally displaced people (IDP) with a military presence (called a 'detachment') that was ostensibly meant to protect them from the LRA. According to one camp leader who witnessed his camp being set up, the aim was, 'To avoid abduction; to save the properties of the innocent; to save the lives of people; to cut communication between the masses and the rebels" (Dolan, 2009: 108). There are different estimates of the number of people who moved into these protected villages. Baines (2007: 101) estimates that up to 90 percent of the population in Acholiland were confined to these 'protected villages' that were later officially referred to as IDP camps. Dolan's research has a more detailed estimate of three districts where IDP camps were set up:

> The overall trend between 1996 and 2006 was for the numbers of displaced people to increase…by 1999, they formed the vast majority of the 585,000 people at risk in Uganda as a whole, a figure that placed Uganda tenth in the world in terms of 'areas with the most people in need of assistance' (Jeffreys, 2002:5). By July 2000 the figure for Northern Uganda was 472,000, and by mid-2002 WFP's working figure was 522,000. Of these, the 372,000 located in Gulu District comprised approximately 74 per cent of the district's population, and 150,000 in Kitgum and Pader Districts represented 28 percent of their populations. The number of displaced people in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader rose from 110,000 in 1996 to 800,000 in 2002, alone (Dolan, 2009: 106).

Those in the camps were inevitably cut off from agricultural production on their land and became entirely dependent on food assistance from humanitarian organisations such as the UN and the World Food Programme (WFP). The camps were mostly overcrowded, under-resourced and offered poor protection from fighting forces. Branch (2011), Dolan (2009) and Finnström (2008) argue that the formation of the camps was a deliberate government strategy to intimidate and depoliticise local populations whom they suspected of directly or indirectly supporting militia groups, especially the LRA. The governments army (called the Uganda People's Defense Force - UPDF) would regularly round up hundreds of men and force them to

identify themselves and/or join the army. If they resisted, they were accused of being rebel collaborators and were arrested and tortured. Rape was often used to humiliate them. In other instances, they would encourage men in the camps to form local security groups to protect the camps. One well known ‘security group’ was called the Rhino Boys. These community security groups would undergo short military training and were given arms. The army thus deliberately militarised male inhabitants of the camps as a way of intimidating men in the camps, while simultaneously bolstering their own military capacity to protect civilians. Despite the presence of the UPDF and the formation of these ‘security groups’, the camps were regularly attacked by the LRA who abducted many people (especially men and children). Thus, to avoid abduction, children would walk to the centre of the towns located near the IDP camps and sleep on the porches of schools, churches, and community halls (Amony, 2015; Jagielski, 2012; McDonnell & Akallo, 2007). These public spaces were considered safer than staying with their families in the camps. These children became known as ‘night commuters’.

The camps were very harsh overcrowded places with minimal access to food, health care, schools and recreation amenities. In January 1999, the Member of Parliament for Gulu municipality reportedly described the camps as being:

> …just like living in hell which is full of rape, torture, and other forms of mistreatment. He also observed that staying in the camp is causing poverty since people have no space for cultivation. [He said] there is even no protection from the government as instead civilians are used as human shields by the army. He said the camp life is violating human rights which are too numerous to mention (Dolan, 2009: 110).

With the increased abduction and killing of men, the population of the camps had up to four times more women than men (Kizza et al., 2012: 2). Research undertaken on gender disaggregation of people who disappeared during the war, estimates that there were many more men than women who disappeared (Mazurana, et al., 2013). Most men in the camps were demoralised, had withdrawn into gambling and resorted to alcohol consumption. Suicide and depression were estimated to be higher amongst men than women (Dolan, 2009; Kizza et al., 2012). Five of the six women’s peace groups included in this study were established during this period of complex displacement and social disruption. All the founders lived in towns that were close to where IDP camps were built. In some instances, the population in the camps outnumbered the number of people who lived in the town before the camps were established. For example, about 70 per cent of the people in Gulu lived in IDP camps. This means that

Gulu's demographics changed dramatically as a result of this mass displacement (Dolan, 2009). Lira and Kitgum were similarly impacted although to a lesser extent.

For a long time though, despite attempts by Ugandans to draw attention to the situation, the international community seemed unaware of the extreme deprivation and multiple forms of violence inherent in the camps and the impact it had on individuals. According to the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), there were only five relief agencies in the north in 1996. These included a UN Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) charged with developing a Relief and Rehabilitation Programme for Displaced People in Northern Uganda (WFP, 1999: 20, in Dolan, 2009: 50). In 1997 the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) set up ACRIS – the Abducted Child Registration and Information System – to record both ongoing patterns of abduction and their return and to build up a profile of missing persons (Dolan, 50). By 1997, Gulu Support the Children Organisation (GUSCO) was founded and was funded by DANIDA. Following a visit from the "all-party International Development Committee of the British House of Commons, the British government donated items valued at 44 million [Ugandan] shillings to GUSCO (approx.. 14,000 British pounds)" (Dolan, 2009: 49). Shortly after this, Hillary Clinton committed to provide USD 500,000 to local groups such as Concerned Parents Association (CPA) and GUSCO for children to receive food and medical care. She also committed to provide another USD 2 million over the next three years for a "…new Northern Uganda Initiative that will help people plagued by rebel activities get jobs, rebuild schools, health clinics and return to their own communities" (Dolan 2009: 49-50). These funds were to be provided via USAID.

The UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland's visit to Northern Uganda in November 2003 also resulted in further international support when he stated that the situation in Northern Uganda was one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world (Dolan, 2009). This sparked an increase in levels of external intervention from UNOCHA, UNICEF, Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and their implementing partners. By early 2004, the World Food Programme (WFP) were providing relief to over 1.5 million internally displaced people, including hundreds of thousands in Teso and Lango sub-regions (Dolan, 2009: 56). By 2002, the number of relief agencies had increased to 60 from the five initially recorded by UNOCHA in 1996 (Dolan, 2009: 56).

These relief agencies interacted with local community groups that had already begun to find ways to survive in and around the IDP camps. With high levels of sexual violence against women and an increase in their economic deprivation alongside international political commitments to increasing women's involvement in peace and development (see chapter 3.2), 'women's rights' emerged as a common discourse in Acholiland in the 1990's and was further accentuated by the arrival of international relief agencies who funded women's empowerment programmes. These programmes deliberately focused on women who were living in camps by: giving them direct food relief; conducting 'sensitisation' workshops that encouraged women to report 'gender-based violence' to local authorities; encouraging them to take on leadership positions in the community; and setting up micro-credit schemes that targeted women in the camps (Branch, 2011: 138-42). The resultant increasing socio-economic power gained by women provoked resentment from men, especially older men.

> Acholi men tended to blame the government and foreign Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for promoting a desire among women for more authority than they had held in the village, and many men treated the issue of women's rights with undisguised disdain (Branch, 2011: 141).

This meant that, alongside a (re)militarisation of ethnicised masculinities within the camps, burgeoning humanitarian efforts contributed to an empowerment of women that contested patriarchal Acholi and Langi norms (El-Bushra & Sahl, 2005: 26-29).

Besides this drastic increase in humanitarian relief programmes, international development agencies were also present in the Northern Ugandan landscape. For instance, the World Bank funded a project titled the Northern Uganda Reconstruction Program (NURP I) that began in 1992. It was to be 'an emergency operation aimed at restoring basic economic and social infrastructure as well as reviving economic activities in the northern region.' NURP I targeted fourteen districts in total. While budgeted at USD 600 million in 1991, only USD 93.6 million was ultimately disbursed (Dolan, 2009: 45). This programme worked on a political premise that Northern Uganda was no longer at war, but in a post-conflict reconstruction phase. NURP I has been heavily criticised, mostly due to corruption that occurred during implementation. Since 2002, the World Bank has funded Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF), a major component of NURP II. NUSAF was facilitated through community participation with an emphasis on building social capital instead of economic infrastructure. (Branch, 2011: 125). One aspect entailed training hundreds of community-reconciliation and conflict-management

promoters and the distribution of funds to several hundred communities who were supported by NGOs that were involved in various versions of reconciliation and conflict resolution activities (Branch, 2011: 127). Women's community peace efforts became intertwined with NUSAF and other large development projects funded via the government, either as 'implementing' partners, or as community-reconciliation and conflict-management promoters, or as beneficiaries.

Six years after the establishment of the camps and while these humanitarian and development projects were underway, the government put in place an Amnesty Act (on 17 January 2000). The Act (Amnesty Act, 2000) offered amnesty for 'any Ugandan who has at any time since the 26th day of January, 1986 engaged in or is engaging in war or armed rebellion against the government of the Republic of Uganda'. Persons who voluntarily put themselves forward were to be pardoned and excused from criminal prosecution. The Amnesty Commission, that was set up to facilitate the implementation of the Amnesty Act of 2000, had to deal with large numbers of abductees and returnees within a matter of days or weeks. Amnesty was only available for former members of militia groups who were above twelve years of age and who had been part of a militia group for more than four months. In all other respects, it was a blanket amnesty, open to all members of rebel groups, including their leadership. Due to both lack of funding, (the Government provided the Commission with just under USD 1 million annually for administrative costs) and, some would argue, lack of political will, the amnesty process took another year before it was actually fully functional. Apart from this, very few members of the LRA chose to take Amnesty. Between 2000 and 2001, it was found that "…less than 400 LRA members had taken up amnesty by April 2002" (Dolan, 2009: 52). Furthermore, it turned out that up to two thirds of men who received amnesty were pressured to join the governments army – UPDF (Dolan, 2009: 53).

The expectation that returnees would be integrated into the Ugandan army meant the amnesty process facilitated a continued (re) militarisation of men and boys. This happened alongside an under resourced re-integration process. The seeds and funds (to enable them to start up a small business) that were handed out to returnees were considered to be insufficient. Many people wanted more than this minimal material assistance. They wanted substantive reparations for economic, psychological, and political losses they had incurred as a result of the war (Justice & Reconciliation Project, 2012).

Another limitation was that amnesty was mostly intended for men and boys who tended to return without children or their 'war wives'. This meant that there was no integration plan for women and girls (Mazurana & Eckerbom, 2013). It was not surprising then that women's groups such as Concerned Parenthood Association, Gulu Support the Children (GUSCO) and Kitgum Concerned Women's Association (KICWA - one of the groups examined in this study – see chapter 5) ended up functioning as reception centres for women and children who took up amnesty. It was these and other community groups who focused on women's needs (such as Women's Advocacy Network and Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative [KIWEPI] – both examined in this study) that were left to grapple with the complexities of reintegration and reparations from women and girls who returned. Baines (2017) and Ocheri (2011) examine these complex questions of 'rehabilitation' that these women (who were once part of militia groups) faced. These authors highlight the agency of young mothers in their own re-construction of 'post-bush' life and livelihoods. This is yet another under-explored area of 'peace work'.

While amnesty was underway, on 12 March 2002 the government of Uganda passed a protocol that sanctioned a large military attack on LRA bases in what is now South Sudan. This was only two years after amnesty was granted so this made it more unlikely that the LRA would disband. Rather than encourage fighters to return to their communities and hand back their arms in exchange for amnesty, there was a remilitarisation of communities in the north. This occurred in two ways – the redeployment of an estimated 40,000 soldiers from the Ugandan army by August 2002, and a dramatic increase in abductions by LRA to increase their fighting ranks. The Ugandan army increased its reliance on civilian men in Northern Uganda. A local militia group formed in Lango to support government in fighting against the rebels was called Amuka group (Rhino boys). "Amuka", is the Langi word for Rhino. A Similar group in Teso is called the 'Arrow boys". At least 25, 000 men were brought in to supposedly share the burden of protecting the civilian population and enable the army to intensify its pursuit of the LRA (Dolan, 2009: 55).

This phase of remilitarisation of Northern Uganda meant that there was an escalation of killing of people by the Ugandan army and increased suffering of civilian populations. "Despite the Ugandan government's claim that they had obliterated LRA bases, UNICEF reported that only 3000 LRA abductees whose return had been included in contingency plans prepared by humanitarian agencies – had been rescued by UPDF' (Dolan, 2009: 54). This continuous

onslaught on LRA while formal peace talks were underway has been argued to be one of the main reasons why the government-led peace process stalled and finally collapsed.

In 2003, because of this onslaught from the Ugandan army (with the backing of the Government of Sudan), the LRA took the war to eastern Uganda, reaching Soroti and Katakwi, as well as Lira District. As in the past, the LRA was not the only source of violence, but they bore principal responsibility. Abductions increased dramatically, with some estimates reaching as high as 5000 new abductions in the period June 2002 to March 2003 (Dolan, 2009). Nightly commuting of children to towns in search of safety re-emerged on a massive scale. It featured prominently in attempts to draw the attention of the international community. Less attention was given to an unprecedented escalation of militarisation.

In the midst of this, in January 2004, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Luis Moreno Ocampo, initiated an investigation into the LRA at the request of the Ugandan government. Local cultural and religious leaders immediately began to lobby the ICC to stop its investigation, claiming they would deal with LRA leaders the ‘Acholi way,’ using local justice mechanisms that purportedly facilitated the restoration of the community and, which would bring about a more sustained peace. The apparent clash of international conceptions of justice with the local approaches raised concerns about how the former compromised the latter.

> Archbishop Jean Baptiste Odama, head of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), argued that ‘the presence of the court here and its activities are in danger of jeopardizing efforts to build the rebels’ confidence in peace talks.’ Amnesty was considered by the religious leaders to be a crucial step in building this confidence. The Archbishop asked: ‘How can we tell the LRA soldiers to come out of the bush and receive amnesty, when at the same time the threat of arrest by the ICC hangs over their heads?’ (Baines, 2007: 101).

Subsequent years witnessed a reduction in mass public violence. This could be attributed to three factors: failure of the peace talks; retreat of the LRA into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic; and a reduction in LRA attacks on local communities. There was an eventual closure of IDP camps and this resulted in an increase in efforts to reintegrate people into their ancestral homes. This was after people had been displaced for up to 10-15 years, so there was much angst and confusion about who had claim to what land and where (Mugizi & Matsumoto, 2021; Saito & Burke, 2014). At the time of this

study, land acquisitions in Northern Uganda were a particularly sensitive issue. Resettlement was further complicated by speculation about the presence of oil (Ogwang & Vanclay, 2019; Ogwang, Vanclay & van den Assem, 2019; Sjögren, 2014). The vast, fertile and possibly oil-rich land in Northern Uganda had attracted the attention of prospective investors, who were willing and able to take advantage of an impoverished population. In addition to the many local land disputes, the region had recently witnessed an increasing number of controversial land purchases, leases and allocations. All of this fuelled anxiety and tension.

This tension around land had 'gendered' consequences, especially for women whose access to land was intertwined with patriarchal patrilineal clan structures. According to Mwesigye, Guloba and Barungi (2020: 74), "…women in Uganda are primary users of land and provide the bulk of 'non-contractible' agricultural outputs. Despite this, men dominate most decisions related to land use and management, and the security of women's land tenure can be tenuous". This is largely because 80 percent of Uganda's land is governed by customary tenure (Hannay & Scalise, 2015) in which patrilineal inheritance secures men's ownership of land at the expense of women (Doss et al., 2012; Tripp, 2004). Even though the rules governing land vary across 56 customary groups, this aspect is similar across the country. In exceptional cases, where a woman purchases land, she is likely to have more control over its use because clan authority tended to have more control over inherited land than purchased land. Where daughters inherited land, the amount of land tended to be less than that inherited by sons. They only received usufruct rights of their natal homes and rarely ownership rights, whereas sons got ownership rights over inherited land. Overall, women's access to land is mainly through marriage and this makes their possibility of reintegration even more unstable because many women lost their access to land when their husbands died. Where a husband died, the land is generally inherited by sons, but may, though rarely, also be left to daughters. If a widow inherited land, it was ultimately meant for her children (particularly sons) and she was expected to first be bound by obligations to her husband's lineage and his broader clan (Burke & Kobusingye, 2014: 4-5).

Patriarchal social systems such as these continue to shape post-conflict reconstruction efforts that were led by international humanitarian, government, and development organisations in Northern Uganda. As a result, this context of mass displacement and precarious reintegration strategies meant that women's peace activism was severely constrained by a number of factors that neo-liberal peacebuilding approaches often overlooked. Quasi-legal rights discourse and

an over emphasis on micro-credit schemes meant that the structural causes of the war that were entangled with patriarchal social systems were left unaddressed.

3.6. Chapter summary

This chapter offered a gendered historical analysis of war in Uganda with a focus on militarism and community peacebuilding in Northern Uganda. Most historical analyses of the formation of Uganda as a nation state does not adequately deconstruct intersectional complexities of femininities. Existing literature on Uganda's history of political upheaval tends to depict men as key protagonists of instability with an inadequate analysis of other genders that shaped and were shaped by shifting political contexts of war in Uganda. The chapter points to four main gaps in research on gender and war in Uganda. These are: scant attention to an imagination of 'gender' outside body-centric heteronormative framings; minimal analysis of fluid gendered subjectivities, especially women's socio-political spaces of power in Northern Uganda; a limited gender analysis of post-conflict reconstruction efforts; and an inadequate critical analysis of women's political subjectivities and how these shaped peace efforts in Northern Uganda.

Inspired by Amadiume (1987, 1997) and Oyewumi's (1997) conceptualisation of gender, this chapter considered literature that paid attention to 'fluid' masculine and feminine subjectivities. The considered literature co-exists with and contests a more static body-centric notion of womanhood that tends to dominate feminist discourse in Uganda. For example, by drawing on Musisi's (1991) and Nannyonga-Tamusuza's (2009) research on the Baganda, the chapter points to the history of socio-cultural constructions of masculine-femininities and a version of matrilineal descent that is worth noting.

Additionally, the chapter reviewed research on dominant ethnicities in Northern Uganda and found that prominent literature refers to the presence of patrilineal clan systems where some women hold power via spiritual practices and age-gender dispositions within their fathers' or husbands' (patri)lineage. Although 'gender' is partially theorised from the perspective of patrilineal inheritance structures, the chapter points out that there is minimal analysis of complex gendered socio-political spaces of power. The chapter also reviewed literature that offered some insight on intersections of gender, lineage, age, and political status and examined how these became entangled with British colonial interpretations and impositions of gender, race and class in Northern Uganda.

The chapter referred to existing literature on women and peacebuilding and points to women's involvement in peace efforts in post independent Uganda dating back to 1985 when Tito Okello seized power in a coup. Other numerous and multifaceted peace efforts took place prior to and later alongside government-led formal peace negotiation processes between 1986 and 2008. Although there is some documentation of women's participation in aspects of these formal peace processes, the chapter notes that there is limited analysis of women's efforts outside formal peace process and even less analysis of how these women have theorised peace in Northern Uganda. This thesis seeks to fill this gap in literature.

The chapter also reviewed literature on the impact of militarism and post-conflict reconstruction efforts led by government and international agencies A review of literature about the effects of mass displacement and precarious reintegration strategies pointed to ways in which women's community peace building efforts were inadvertently intertwined with neo-liberal peacebuilding approaches and quasi-legal rights discourse that centred micro-credit schemes and legal reform. There was minimal recognition of structural causes of the war that were entangled with patriarchal social systems. This was especially evident in land resettlement processes. The following chapter presents the research methodology.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodologies used. It discusses the research design, sampling paradigm, sampling phases, sample sizes and selection, data collection approaches and instruments, data analysis methodology, positionality and self-reflexivity in detail. Furthermore, it considers the ethics and limitations of this study.

4.2. Feminist research paradigm

This is an exploratory qualitative study that also draws on critical feminist epistemologies. As Babbie states, "Every observation is qualitative at the outset, whether it be your experience of someone's intelligence, the location of a pointer on a measuring scale, or a check mark entered in a questionnaire" (Babbie, 2010: 24). Qualitative methodologies are more likely to enable an analysis of the rich complexity of meanings that participants themselves offer. This approach was appropriate for a study of this nature since it interrogated women activists' accounts of building peace in Northern Uganda. This enabled theories of 'peace' to emerge from research participants' own experiences. The research process was thus "…attentive to the micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as to the macro-politics of global economic and political systems and processes" (Mohanty, 2002: 51).

According to Babbie (2010:39), "Feminist paradigms not only reveal the treatment of women or the experience of oppression but often point to limitations in how aspects of social life are examined and understood." Feminist researchers are acutely aware of the need to deconstruct and shift hierarchical power that often shapes relationships between 'researcher' and 'researched' (Brayton, 1997:4). For me, this entailed recognising intersections of power (and disempowerment) embedded in my own subjectivity and that of the participants. My own 'peace work' in non-governmental spaces and my familiarity with aspects of women's activism across the continent influenced my interactions with research participants. Of particular relevance here was my position as a university-based researcher and board member of Isis-WICCE – an organisation that had worked extensively in Northern Uganda. As Nagar and Ali (2003:65) state:

> The challenge for postcolonial and feminist geographers, then, is to conceptualise border crossings that are committed to forming collaborative partnerships with academic and non-academic actors in "other" worlds, in every sense of the term – partnerships in which the questions around how power and authority would be shared cannot be answered beforehand, but are imagined, struggled over and resolved through the collaborative process itself.

4.3. Sampling framework

I adopted a non-probability purposive sampling framework and sampled research participants in three phases. My position as board member of an NGO in Uganda that worked on women, peace and security (Isis-WICCE)[8] meant that the research participants from the six women's groups were receptive of my presence because of they had received many years of beneficial guidance and support from Isis-WICCE. The trust they had for Isis-WICCE, meant that they were open to trusting me and had a willingness to introduce me to a broader network of people who assisted with obtaining relevant information.

Two of the groups, Women's Peace Initiative – Uganda (WOPI-U) and KIWEPI were partly founded as a result of skills training workshops that Isis-WICCE had implemented. Two of the key informants stated that they were inspired to set up their peace groups after taking part in workshops run by Isis-WICCE in the late 1990s. Research participants referred to regular direct mutual support in the form of collective advocacy work that sought to influence formal peace talks and post-conflict policy frameworks after the peace agreement (as stated in section 3.3) . A staff member of Isis-WICCE clarified their first involvement with communities in the north:

> *Our first engagement in the north, directly and indirectly it started in 1997 when we first reflected about us having a niche and focusing on the issues on the armed conflict*

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[8] Isis Women's Cross Cultural Exchange (WICCE) is a non-governmental organisation based in Kampala (Uganda) that focuses on women, peace and security. Its programmes include a feminist leadership training institute on peacebuilding and human security; a resource centre focused on conducting research and generating feminist knowledge on women's experiences and specific needs in conflict and post-conflict which also formed the evidence base for women's advocacy for peace and gender-responsive post-conflict recovery in 27 countries. Isis-WICCE also focuses on healing women war survivors – addressing their psychological, physical and gynaecological needs – and mentoring women leaders and women's groups to continue their peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts. The organisation recently changed their name to Women's International Peace Centre (Women's International Peace Centre, 2020).

and getting to their places to understand what the context was. … And so [in]1999 we were in Gulu we did the research, talked to the women and in 2000 we did the medical intervention to be able to provide healing to some of the key health complaints that women presented but there hadn't been any other person providing the health service. In Kitgum it was 2000/2001 and Kitgum we went in to provide the medical intervention. (27 February, 2015, Kampala).

Part of their work with communities in the north involved exchange programmes between women in the north and those in the Luwero Triangle. These exchange programmes were aimed at diffusing ethnic tensions. Women in Luwero resented Acholi people because the soldiers that committed violence in Luwero were largely of Acholi ethnic origin.

4.3.1. Sampling Phases

The first phase involved gaining access to women activists who have been involved in peacebuilding work in the north. This was done with the aid of staff members of Isis-WICCE who provided initial contact details for a selection of women's groups that they had worked with. Isis-WICCE's history of research on Ugandan women's experiences of armed conflict and the resultant formation of women's self-help groups[9] resulted in relationships of trust and support between staff of Isis-WICCE and local women's peace groups. Furthermore, Isis-WICCE's varied research about women, peace and security in Northern Uganda (Isis-WICCE:2001a; 2001b; 2002a; 2002b; 2006a; 2006b; 2008) offered rich information about women's peacebuilding efforts in selected communities. It was this information that enabled me to use purposive sampling as a way to select sample respondents who were best able to provide 'information-rich' responses to the area of study being explored (Babbie, 2010: 179).

Over a period of two weeks in October 2013, I visited Gulu, Lira and Kitgum. The purpose of the visit was to locate the contacts provided by Isis-WICCE. The contacts were from the following three peace groups:

- **People's Voice for Peace** (PVP) in Gulu;
- **Women's Peace Initiative** – Uganda (WOPI-U) – formerly Lira Women's Peace Initiative in Lira;

[9] Five groups have been established in Northern Uganda: Gulu Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Resettlement (GWPRR);Kole Women Peace Initiative (KOWEPI); Lira Women Peace Initiative renamed Women Peace Initiative - Uganda (WOPI-U); Kitgum Women Peace Initiative (KIWEPI); and Teso Women Peace Activists (TEWPA).

- **Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative** (KIWEPI) – in Kitgum

I introduced myself and gained their initial consent to take part in the research process. I also sought information about other groups that were known for their peacebuilding efforts that focused on women. As a result I was able to locate the following peace groups:

- **Women's Advocacy Network** (WAN) in Gulu
- **Kitgum Concerned Women's Association** (KICWA) in Kitgum,
- **Live Again** in Kitgum.

The Director and founder member of KIWEPI provided contacts for founders of KICWA and Live Again. Through the offices of the Justice and Reconciliation Programme (JRP), where WAN was located, I met and introduced myself to one founder who introduced me to nine members of WAN.

The second phase of sampling entailed selecting community members who had interacted with and been direct beneficiaries of the women's groups. I held four focus group discussions with beneficiaries of KIWEPI, two with beneficiaries of WOPI-U and one with beneficiaries of WAN. I did this after interviews with founder members and staff members.

A third and final stage entailed selecting organisations that had worked with women's groups involved in this study. The bases of selection for these organisations were their presence in Gulu, Lira, and Kitgum and their interaction with the six selected women's peace groups. The data gained from the focus groups and the individual interviews with representatives from women's organisations that interacted with the six women's peace groups made triangulation of data possible.

4.3.2 Six Community-based peace groups (purposive sample)

Six peace groups were purposely drawn from three towns in Northern Uganda – Lira, Gulu, and Kitgum. The rationale for the choice of these specific peace groups in Lira, Gulu, and Kitgum was because these towns received the largest numbers of people who sought refuge from armed conflict, killing, abduction, rape, and looting by armed groups in surrounding rural areas. It is estimated that there were approximately two million internally displaced persons (IDP) in camps that were established by the Ugandan government (Dolan, 2009). The camps were poorly resourced and populated by a higher ratio of women than men – an average of 4.4

women to one man (Kizza et al., 2012:2). I will now present the key characteristics of each of these community peace groups.

1. **In Lira, the Women's Peace Initiative – Uganda (WOPI-U) formed part of the sample**.

The key characteristics of this group are:

Year founded: 2003

Location and membership: Lira town, Lira District. The original members were later joined by other members comprising of social workers, religious leaders, and other professionals, making a total of 40 members at the time when WOPI-U's actual field operations started.

Short history:[10] WOPI-U was initially called Lira Women's Peace Initiative (LIWEPI) and was founded as a direct result of 20 years of armed conflict in Northern Uganda, which left a number of people displaced from their homes and settled in camps. The founders were especially motivated by the plight of people living in poorly resourced IDP camps near Lira. They were especially concerned for women and girls who were in the majority and who struggled to take care of themselves and their families.

Core peacebuilding activities:

Initially, the main objective of LIWEPI was to help people in IDP camps deal with their situations and give them hope that peace would be realised someday. However currently, the organization focuses on peacebuilding and issues related to reintegration of the people (previously living in camps) into their original community life. The reintegration process now includes counselling, psychosocial support and income generation aspects which are intended to make the reintegration process complete and wholesome.

[10] Obtained from WOPI-U's draft Strategic Plan -2012-16 (Women's Peace Initiative – Uganda, 2014) that I was given to comment on during my field work in Lira.

2. **In Gulu, the Women's Advocacy Network and People's Voice for Peace formed part of the sample**

The key characteristics of WAN (Justice and Reconciliation Project, 2021) are:

Year founded: Began in 2011 and became a registered community-based organisation (CBO) in 2015.

Location and membership: Gulu town where it is housed at the Justice and Reconciliation offices based in Gulu. It is a forum of 900 war-affected (mainly) women and men. It is made up of 16 grassroots women's groups within the Acholi, Lango and West Nile sub-regions.

Short history: WAN was founded by women who were involved in one of the Justice and Reconciliation Research Projects. The founding group were all women who were abducted by the LRA as children and returned as young adults. All had children they bore during their time in captivity. Their initial focus was specifically tailored to respond to the needs of women who were abducted during the war. These activities were considered part of the Justice and Reconciliation Project's organisational activities. The group eventually formed its own activities that grew to be recognised as separate from the broader work of the JRP.

Core peacebuilding activities: It currently receives funding from the Justice and Reconciliation Project and other external actors to conduct storytelling, documentation, advocacy, capacity-building and economic empowerment activities. Its member groups also maintain group savings and loan schemes that promote a savings culture and responsible borrowing practices.

The key characteristics of People's Voice for Peace (PVP) are:

Year Founded: 1995

Location and membership: Gulu town. Membership initially consisted of women directly affected by the war. It later grew to include the broader community clustered in small groups in and around Gulu town. At the time of data collection, PVP had no offices and its members had not met for over a year.

Short history: In 1995 Rosalba Oywa formed PVP that supported community reintegration of formerly abducted children. PVP also advocates for the inclusion of those experiencing violence first hand, especially women in peace processes. At the time of founding PVP, Oywa had been Programme Director for the Agency for Cooperation and

Research in Development in Gulu, and Regional Coordinator for the Coalition for Peace in Africa, overseeing its activities in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Sudan. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

Core peacebuilding activities (Peace Direct, 2021)

People's Voice for Peace (PVP) has been a sustained voice for peace in Northern Uganda. Its activities include building networks of women at grassroots level in order to give voice to the concerns and priorities of women during the current post-conflict situation. PVP facilitated community reintegration of formerly abducted children in Northern Uganda, and consolidated the current relative peace through collaborative initiatives with women's peacebuilding organisations from Northern Uganda. Some included the Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies of Gulu University and University of Oklahoma (USA) Centre for Peace and Development. PVP’s activities included skills training, collaborative initiatives, lobbying, meetings, field visits, peace marches and community mobilisation.

3. **In Kitgum, three peace groups were targeted, namely Kitgum’s Women’s Peace Initiative (KIWEPI): Kitgum Concerned Women’s Association (KICWA), and Live Again.**

The key characteristics of Kitgum Women’s Peace Initiative (KIWEPI) are:

Year Founded: 1999

Location and membership: Kitgum town. KIWEPI got registered with Kitgum NGO Forum (KINGFO) and Kitgum District Local Government (KDLG) in March 2004. Members are located in the following counties - Orom Sub county, Nam okora sub county, Lagoro sub county and Akwang sub county.

Short history: KIWEPI was founded by a group of women volunteers from Kitgum District when the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency was at its climax. KIWEPI was initiated to advocate for peace, reconciliation, rehabilitation and recovery for the healing processes of women and girls who were abducted, gang raped and suffered all forms of human rights violation and abuses during the two-decade civil conflict in Northern Uganda.

In 2008, KIWEPI joined a task force steered by Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE). KIWEPI and other civil society organisations (CSOs) that advocated the review of the National Peace and Recovery Framework and related documents. This entailed identifying gender gaps in the implementation of PRDP. It entailed being part of the working committees that included with staff in the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Gender, and other women-led organizations. They were charged with ensuring the participation of women and girls in the country's demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) programmes.

Core peacebuilding activities:

KIWEPI promotes peacebuilding and conflict resolution through: ; economic empowerment and building livelihoods; and the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence. It advocates for the implementation of UN Resolutions 1325, 1820 and the Goma Declaration[11]; promotes reconciliation and recovery processes among the war-affected Acholi community; and works to ensure women's involvement in peacebuilding conflict resolution. Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative (KIWEPI) has received more than 600 young women and girls returning from the bush who have suffered from various types of trauma as both victims and perpetrators of violence. KIWEPI provides rehabilitation services including medical treatment, psychosocial therapy, mentoring, vocational and life skills training, and accompaniment throughout the process of reintegration of displaced communities into their ancestral homes. KIWEPI works with community leaders to sensitize them about the needs of women and girl returnees and address their stigmatization. KIWEPI advocates for these women and girls' legal rights and their access to justice by mediating land dispute cases, facilitating community dialogues and establishing village loan and savings associations to promote livelihoods for women and men. This experience has enabled KIWEPI to assist the Government of Uganda to integrate a gender-responsive lens in the National Peace and Recovery Framework.

[11] The Goma Declaration is a build up to the work of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children and the CGLR Project on Prevention and Fight Against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Gender-Based Violence and Assistance to the Victims. It seeks to commit governments in the Great Lakes region to commit to putting in place measures to prevent and fight against sexual and gender based violence, and put in place legal processes that can enable the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators of sexual violence in the region (Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, 2008).

4. **The key characteristics of Kitgum Concerned Women's Association (KICWA) are:**

Year founded: 1998

Location and membership: Kitgum Town

Shorty history: When the first casualties of the war started crowding Kitgum's hospitals in 1998, seven women who were also friends and all grandmothers set up a makeshift kitchen under a shea tree. They took turns to cook food for the orphaned children. Little by little, they raised money to pay for a place for the children to stay until a home could be found. They called themselves Kitgum Concerned Women's Association (KICWA).
Core peacebuilding activities: KICWA specialises in looking after children and young people when they first come back from captivity. KICWA provides food, medical treatment, counselling and most importantly a home for children who were orphaned by the war.

The key characteristics of Live Again are:

Year founded: 2006

Location and membership: Kitgum town. They began with about four groups of 30 members each and later grew to eight groups. Members of the groups mainly consisted of widows and women whose children were missing.

Short history: Live Again began after women were brought together from different sub counties in Kitgum and formed a gathering called "Women's Mission for Peace." This was held in 2003. It was a five day gathering that included religious leaders, government officials, and women from different sub counties. The purpose of the event was to advocate for peace and dialogue. When fighting continued, the group then decided to focus on trauma healing and recovery from protracted violence experienced during the war.

Core peacebuilding activities: The groups were trained in nutrition, early childhood development and training people in basic group therapy skills that could be used in the communities in which they lived. They also dealt with trauma that resulted from violence that

occurred in their homes, including ‘gender-based violence’ particularly that experienced by women in the communities in which they worked, especially widows. There was also emphasis on restoration of family life, cultural practices, and assisting the physically disabled. This also included a rotating micro-credit scheme that supports families to become economically self-sufficient.

Table 1: Women's peace groups - Interviews and focus group discussions

Source: Fieldnotes

Organisation	Number of Key Informants	Number of people in Seven Focus Groups	Number of informants per Organisation
Women's Peace Initiative - Uganda (WOPI- U)	3 Founder members 1 Staff member	Two focus groups consisting of 39 people in total	43
Women's Advocacy Network (WAN)	1 Founder member who was also a staff member	1 focus group consisting of 9 people	10
People's Voice for Peace (PVP)	1 founder member	None	1
Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative (KIWEPI)	2 Founder members 4 staff members 1 intern	Four focus groups consisting of 28 people	34
Kitgum Concerned Women's Association (KICWA)	1 Founder member 2 staff members	None	3
Live Again	1 Founder member who is also a staff member	None	1
TOTAL	17 Key Informants	76 participants in 7 focus groups	93

SAMPLE COMPOSITION: (THREE SAMPLE SIZES)

Sample A: Seventeen key informants who were either founders or staff of community-based organisations (CBOs) were individually interviewed.

Table 2: Sample A – Respondent Identifiers

SAMPLE A: RESONDENT IDENTIFIERS		
KICWA	**KIWEPI**	**Live Again**
Key Informant U, volunteer Key informant Y, founder Key Informant Z, staff	Key Informant A, Founder Key Informant B, staff Key Informant C, founder Key Informant D, staff Key Informant H, intern Key Informant L, founder Key Informant X, staff	Key Informant T, founder
PVP	**WAN**	**WOPI-U**
Key Informant K, founder	Key Informant N staff and founder	Key Informant E, staff Key Informant J, founder Key Informant S, founder Key Informant W, founder

Sample B: Seven focus groups with a total of 76 people. All participants in the focus groups were beneficiaries of activities undertaken by the women's peace groups sampled for this study.

Table 3: Sample B – Focus Groups

Organisation	Number of Focus Groups	Place where focus group was conducted
WOPI-U	2	Agweng Village
		Barlonyo Village
KIWEPI	4	Namukora sub county
		Agoro sub county
WAN	1	Gulu town
Total	7	

Sample C: Seven informants who assisted in substantiating data obtained from (sample A) and focus group discussions (sample B). Sample C entailed individual interviews with seven persons who worked in larger organisations that interfaced with the six peace groups included in this study (See table 2).

Table 4: Sample C - Respondent Identifiers

Sample C - RESPONDENT IDENTIFIERS			
Amnesty International	**FIDA**	**UWONET**	**Isis-WICCE**
Information R, staff	Informant M, staff, FIDA (Gulu) Informant Q, staff, FIDA (Kitgum) Informant F, staff, FIDA (Kitgum)	Informant O, staff, UWONET	Informant V, former staff, Isis-WICCE Informant U, staff, Isis-WICCE

Table 5: Informants who worked in larger organisations

Name of Organisation	Location	Informants
Amnesty International – Kitgum Office	Kitgum	1 staff member
Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA)	Kitgum and Gulu	3 staff members
Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)	Kampala	1 staff member
Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (WICCE)	Kampala	1 staff member 1 former staff member
Total number of informants		**7**

Data from all three samples was triangulated with other sources of data gleaned from reports and documents.

4.4. Data collection

For data collection, I used two semi-structured interview schedules. I used Appendix 1, (page 221) to guide the in-depth face-to-face interviews with both sets of key informants. I also used a focus group interview schedule (Appendix 2, page 224) to guide the focus group discussion.

In addition, authors who conducted research in the same research sites were drawn on to corroborate data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions.

4.4.1 **The use of interpreters**

I relied on three interpreters because most participants who were part of focus groups spoke Acholi or Langi as their first language and were not very fluent in English. I was also aware that "Like researchers, interpreters bring their own assumptions and concerns to the interview and the research process. The research thus becomes subject to 'triple subjectivity' (the interactions between research participant, researcher and interpreter), and this needs to be made explicit'' (Bassnet, 1994 in Temple & Edwards, 2002: 5). In an attempt to pay attention to interpreter's subjectivities, I conducted in-depth interviews with each one of them and included them as key informants. I established that all three were skilled interpreters and were thus able to aptly assist with interpretation during focus group discussions. One interpreter who (Name is kept anonymous as per consent form) transcribed a focus group discussion into English and Acholi. This is a professional skill she obtained as research assistant at JRP. The time spent

with these interpreters helped me establish a reflexive evaluation of the interpreters' positionality - their values and beliefs, and an understanding of their relationship to the focus group discussants.

The first interpreter worked for WOPI-U as a programme coordinator. She grew up in Lira and spoke Langi and English fluently. I met with her several times before I interviewed her. I also attended a staff meeting and accompanied her when she took part in a community health assessment that involved other organisations in Lira. Having worked at WOPI-U for almost two years, she knew members of WOPI-U's peace clubs and advised which of these peace clubs could be involved in the focus group discussions held in Agweng and Barlonyo. My close interaction with her enabled me to get some insight into her own subjectivities and have a sense of her perspectives on the focus groups held in Agweng and Barlonyo.

The second interpreter was an intern in KIWEPI. She grew up in Kitgum and spoke Acholi and English fluently. The director of KIWEPI introduced her to me within the first week of my visit. I spent up to three weeks with various staff at KIWEPI, so I had the opportunity to get to know her. She assisted with interpretation during observations in Kitgum and with focus group discussions held in Agoro and Nam okora sub-county. She was familiar with the work of KIWEPI because she had been an intern for just under a year and had taken part in several events and activities convened by KIWEPI. She grew up in Kitgum during the war and many of her family members were either abducted, missing or killed during the war. She was at one of the schools in Northern Uganda that had been raided by the LRA so she witnessed abduction and had spent time with girls who returned from captivity.

The third interpreter worked for WAN as a project officer for the Justice Research Project that hosted WAN. She first joined Justice and Reconciliation Project (that hosted WAN) as a translator for Erin Baines, a co-founder of JRP, who was (at the time) conducting research on experiences of women who had been abducted by the LRA. In 2013, she wrote a book (unpublished) titled "Adyebo" that was inspired by her work as a translator. The book weaved an analysis of women's narratives of their experiences during captivity that centred the story of the formation of WAN and key themes that they focused on. Although originally from Northern Uganda, she grew up in Kampala because her mother ran away from war in the north. When her mother died, she moved back to Gulu (at 7the age of thirteen) to live with her aunt. She was in a convent school in Kampala at the time and hence somewhat shielded from the war. She longed to learn more about what happened during the war and was especially keen on

helping women who returned from captivity. She was instrumental in helping with selecting people to include in the focus group discussion that was held with members of WAN.

4.4.2. Semi-structured interviews

According to Corbetta (2003: 270):

> The interviewers' outline may contain varying degrees of specification and detail. It may simply be a checklist of the topics to be dealt with, or a list of questions (usually of a general nature) having the goal of supplying the interviewer with guidelines.

Keeping Corbetta's insights in mind, I asked the interviewees to speak about their experience of living through armed conflict and their efforts to build peace in their respective communities. The questions sought to elicit information about what happened in their lives during the war and just before they founded their peace groups. I asked why they founded peace groups that focused on women, what peacebuilding activities they initiated and why. The interviews probed which peacebuilding activities were most impactful for the interviewees. I further explored their perceptions of peace and what it meant to them, with a focus on conceptual and practical links between their ideas of womanhood, gender equality and peacebuilding (Appendix I: Interview Guide: 221-223). I probed for information about their experiences of the war; how their families were affected and what motivated them to form the peace groups that they founded that are the subject of this thesis.

These interviews were always preceded by an initial meeting in which I shared my own personal background and interest in the research topic. This helped me prepare for the interview and ensure that participants had an opportunity to seek clarity about the research objectives . I took field notes regularly (almost every day while I was in Uganda) and especially before and after each interview.

4.4.2. Focus group discussions

In addition to individual semi-structured interviews, I conducted focus group discussions. According to Morgan (1996:133) focus groups enable the possibility for empowering research participants within a group setting where richer responses are possible. Data from focus groups enabled triangulation of data collected from individual one-on-one interviews with founder

members and staff members of women’s community based peace groups. By engaging with community members who were beneficiaries of women’s peace groups, I could gain different perspectives on the various activities that were undertaken.. Focus group discussions enabled the possibility of eliciting richer responses about the nature of peace building activities undertaken by the peace groups. The focus aimed to assist with triangulating information collected from individual interviews with founders and staff members of women’s peace groups that were part of Sample A. Focus groups enabled beneficiaries to feel relatively comfortable with bringing up different ideas about their experiences without the pressure to provide a definitive answer to each question. Participants were able to build on the responses of others so as to serve as a spark for deeper discussion.

Table 6: Focus group discussions

Organisation	Number of Focus Groups	Place where focus group conducted	Number of participants in each focus group	Men	Women
WOPI-U [Women's Peace Initiative-Uganda]	2	Agweng Village	22	1	21
		Barlonyo Village	17	1	16
KIWEPI [Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative]	4	Namukora sub county	6	6	0
			5	0	5
		Agoro sub county	12	0	12
			5	5	0
WAN [Women's Advocacy Network]	1	Gulu town	9	0	9
Total	7		**76**	**13**	**63**

Each focus group opened up further insights into the complexities that communities faced in rebuilding their social fabric after the war. The selection of focus group participants was also determined by which peace groups were still actively in touch with their beneficiaries at the time of the study. Topics that came up in the focus groups were largely informed by the nature of the peacebuilding efforts undertaken by the three peace groups at the time of the study.

At KIWEPI, staff were in the process of conducting a vulnerability needs assessment for their SCORE project in Agoro sub county. I took the opportunity to ask staff to assist in identifying people who had been participating in the project for at least three to five years. Many of the participants were either widows or single mothers and referred to their children as orphans (implying that the father had died or was missing, or even not providing any support) and hence within the classification of 'vulnerability' as outlined by the guide for assessing vulnerability set out in the project. Most participants pointed out that one or more of their children had been registered under SCORE but had not received financial support and were struggling to go to school or get adequate medical attention. I subsequently found out from KIWEPI staff that the

project did not pay for school or medical costs at all. After some consultation, I established that beneficieries were in fact meant to raise their own savings and income through village saving and loan associations (VLSA) and Farmer Field Support (FFS) to cover their children's educational and medical costs. I also learnt that the project assumed that beneficiaries had adequate financial literacy that would enable them to come up with ways of overcoming financial difficulty.

The second focus group discussion in Agoro sub- county included men who were also part of SCORE, but only recently involved in VLSAs that were initially targeted at women. This discussion helped triangulate information the women had shared about men's recent involvement in the VLSA's.

The focus group discussions held in Nam okora sub county assisted in corroborating information about KIWEPI's peacebuilding activities. At the time of the study, KIWEPI was involved in facilitating a community dialogue about a land dispute in Nam okora. I took this opportunity to meet with members of KIWEPI's community-based facilitators in the same area. These members knew of the land dispute in question and worked with KIWEPI to address various issues relating to building peace. Some of these issues raised in the dialogue aimed to: raise awareness about human rights issues on the matter; mediate dialogues between parties; and report cases such as assault, domestic violence, and defilement to relevant clan elders, community leaders, or police and other authorities. The focus group discussion assisted in checking what KIWEPI's community-based facilitators did to respond to these issues. The information elicited from the focus group enabled me to check the efficacy of what what KIWEPI staff claimed the dialogue processes on land disputes aimed to achieve. I was also able to establish beneficiaries impressions of the community dialogue that KIWEPI had facilitated in Nam okora at the time.

A focus group discussion with members of the Women's Advocacy Network assisted in triangulating information about the founding of WAN. The focus group consisted of women who were involved in the founding years. They had all been abducted during the war. They werechildren when they were abducted by rebel groups. The information assisted in assessing information from an interview with one founder member of WAN who was also a translator for the study.

The focus group discussions held in Agweng and Barlonyo villages were selected in conversation with the programme coordinator of WOPI-U. She advised that Agweng was worth

visiting because it had the largest peace club with up to 100 members spread over seven parishes. This was the first peace club formed by WOPI-U just after the war in 2006. This club had since developed a village loan and saving association (VLSA), and undertaken various kinds of psychosocial support in the form of group story-telling that was conducted alongside community mediation processes. The focus group consisted of 22 people. This was more than was anticipated. I struggled to turn people away, so I decided to go ahead with the focus group even though the numbers were too large to have detailed conversation about the kinds of activities that they did with WOPI-U. However, I was able to find out about some of their experiences of the war, especially physical violence, abduction, and forced displacement. In Barlonyo, the focus group consisted of seventeen people and was easier to manage. The conversation revolved around the mass killing of people that had occurred in 2004. There was still a concern that the government had not taken responsibility for the massacre and the community had not been compensated for the loss of family members and trauma in the community. I selected Barlonyo because it was one of the areas that experienced this mass violence and was still grappling with building peace. The focus group offered a chance to confirm what WOPI-U staff said they were doing with the community there.

4.4.3. Observation and 'immersion' at meetings of Peace Groups

I spent between two and four weeks with founder members and staff of four groups included in the study. I went to their offices and took part in discussions and activities. This enabled me to observe the activities they engaged in and also follow up on information about the peace groups, their activities, and/or the communities they worked with. This 'immersion' helped create a deepened understanding of the activities of the peace groups.

4.4.3.1. Community health assessment with WOPI-U

When I was at WOPI-U, I spent time with their assistant coordinator and took part in a workshop that was part of a health assessment programme that was being implemented by the Lira regional referral health centre. The programme was being implemented in partnership with local community-based organisations, of which WOPI-U was one. The programme was partly funded and coordinated by Plan International – an international development organisation that works in 15 districts in Northern Uganda. The health assessment programme used a participatory method to assess the community's experience of the health centres. The method was called a Community Score Card (CSC) that was developed by CARE International in Malawi. The "…process brings together service users (of health services), service providers

and local government to identify service access, utilization and provision challenges, to generate solutions and to work in partnership to implement and track the effectiveness of those solutions in an ongoing process of improvement. The CSC approach consists of five phases, repeated every six months for the life of the project (Gullo et al., 2016: 1469).

The meeting I attended was part of the third phase of this process, that involved holding a workshop that assessed health care service provision at a health centre in Lira. It included community members who use the centre, clinic staff and management personnel in charge of the centre. Taking part in the workshop offered insight into various health challenges facing the community, particularly those that were a consequence of the war.

4.4.3.2. Lived with family of founder of KIWEPI

I was invited to live at the home of one of the founder members of KIWEPI. Their house was only a two minutes' walk from KIWEPI's offices. This provided an opportunity to gain a deeper insight into their family, their values, their experiences of the war that may have influence the formation KIWEPI.

This openness to host me was extended to their KIWEPI offices. Key Informant C (KIC), a founder and director of KIWEPI had arranged for a desk to be allocated to me while I was at KIWEPI offices. I was also introduced to all staff members in a staff meeting. The purpose of my research was explained to everyone. With this I was able to gain access to KIWEPI's documents, activity plans and was in a position to build rapport with staff. During my stay at KIWEPI, I took part in the following activities: two staff meetings; three community dialogues about land convened by KIWEPI; two mediation sessions about land facilitated by KIWEPI; and a community needs assessment. The director later allowed an intern working at KIWEPI to assist with the oral translations for focus group discussions.

4.4.3.3. Vulnerability needs assessment

I took part in a vulnerability needs assessment that was part of a project titled 'Sustainable, Comprehensive Responses (SCORE)' that was funded by USAID that was being implemented in 35 districts in Uganda. KIWEPI was an implementing partner and recipient of funds from USAID. The aim of the project was "to build economic resilience, enhance food security, improve child protection, and increase access to education and critical services" (Cannon et al., 2017: 3). The vulnerability needs assessment took place in Agoro sub county, a two-hour drive from Kitgum, close to the border of South Sudan. The needs assessment was part of the first

phase of the SCORE project that entailed finding out which families in the community were extremely vulnerable based on a list of indicators developed by USAID. Indicators of vulnerability included: people's source and level of income; access to formal education; the kind of food available to families; the frequency of food intake; the presence of any form of child abuse; and access to basic facilities such as latrine; and access to a clinic. With these indicators, KIWEPI staff aimed to capture details of the most vulnerable child in the family – called an index child – and this information was then used to track any improvements in the family.

Families that were selected were then enrolled into one or all of three programmes, namely: Farmer Field Support; Financial Management Literacy; and/or Village Loan and Savings Association. Each KIWEPI staff member assessed at least three families by filling in a standard questionnaire. The findings were then entered onto a database at the KIWEPI office and the chosen families were enrolled into the SCORE project. I accompanied Key Informant B (KIB), who interviewed four families. Being part of this process enabled me to learn about the communities that KIWEPI sought to assist and gain a deeper understanding of the peacebuilding projects they implemented, particularly those that were designed and funded by international NGOs such as USAID. I later conducted two focus group discussions in Agoro sub-county.

4.4.3.4 Community mediation sessions and staff meetings

During fieldwork, I took part in two community mediations and staff meetings. Below is an outline of what these meetings entailed.

Community Mediations: As a result of KIWEPI's role in assisting women in the community with cases of gender-based violence, they received several requests to address violence between (mostly) men and women that concerned land disputes within extended families. On 23 January 2015, I accompanied a member of KIWEPI's staff, a paralegal who worked at a nearby police station, and a member of the Acholi Religious Peace Initiative. Both lead the community mediation and dialogue sessions. The first was about a case that involved a widow who reported her brother-in-law to the police for threatening her with violence. The matter involved a dispute over land and cattle. The widow was allowed to live on her deceased husband's land and access livestock to help her look after her children. The widow accused her brother-in-law (brother of her deceased husband) of not supporting her and her children. She

claimed that this left her no choice but to sell livestock and land without consulting her brother-in-law or the clan elders. The brother-in-law opted to take the matter to KIWEPI for mediation.

We arrived at a village on the outskirts of Kitgum town at about 11.45am. We found about 20 people sitting under a mango tree. We joined them and were given seats. Men were sitting on chairs (most of them) and women sat on a mat on one side. People came to greet us and we began to draw up the agenda. KIWEPI took the lead and clarified the purpose of our visit. It was suggested that the first thing was to agree on who would chair the meeting – either the paralegal or ARLPI member. After a few people raised hands, it was agreed that the paralegal chair the meeting. He introduced himself and began to draw up an agenda. The agenda included hearing from key parties and then viewing the land that was in dispute. It was insightful to watch how KIWEPI staff were involved in facilitating the conversation and how the follow up agreements were made. I was able to observe a follow up meeting at KIWEPI offices on 30 January 2018.

The second community mediation I attended took place in Nam okora sub-county which is about an hour and a half's drive from Kitgum town. The team that I travelled with included a paralegal and two KIWEPI staff. In this case the complainant was an elderly woman of about 95 years old who accused her brothers of selling land that her father left her. She reported the case to the police because her brothers were physically violent towards her. She acquired the land from her father in 1975, after she left her husband and moved back to her paternal clan with her children. Her brothers claimed that they, as sons, were rightful owners of land and did not need to consult with their sister about using or selling the land. Even though we found people already gathered and a draft agenda already drawn up, the accused brothers initially claimed that there is no dispute and KIWEPI had no right to mediate. They also did not want the land to be viewed by the gathering. Thus, the process was delayed, and the land viewing had to be taken off the agenda. After much discussion on who KIWEPI is and relevance of conducting a mediation process rather than court process, everyone agreed to meet and consider mediation.

Community Dialogues: During the time I was in Kitgum, community dialogues were being organised by a group of organisations that were coordinated by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) with support from Oxfam. KIWEPI, KICWA and Live again were involved as convenors, alongside three other local organisations –Meeting Point International, Kerkwaro Acholi and Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI). The purpose of the community

dialogues was to: foster local activism; build women's leadership in addressing violence against women; and advance women's land rights in Kitgum. I took part in two of these dialogues. This gave me a deeper understanding of the various kinds of community concerns that KIWEPI and Live Again were seeking to address. The manner in which the dialogue processes were facilitated offered insight on the range of skills the staff had in working with communities and the level of trust they had built in the community.

One dialogue session that was particularly insightful was held in Akwang sub county. It was attended by approximately 80 people. We arrived about 30 minutes after it had begun and found people discussing a number of concerns: stigmatisation and intimidation of formerly abducted women and widows; negative experiences with their in-laws (especially brothers-in-law); widows' land inheritance issues; rights to land in polygamous marriages and the increased numbers of people seeking land claims since they came out of the IDP camps. The second dialogue I attended was in Orom sub-county. It was convened by staff from Live Again, KIWEPI, and Meeting Point International. This meeting was opened with a speech from the local councillor. There was much more debate about land disputes that related to people from a different sub county claiming land from Orom sub county. There was much discussion on distinctions between clans and trading routes that changed during the war. There was reference to the closeness of Orom sub county to the border of Kenya and the perceived risk of people who were not originally living in Orom sub county during the war, claiming land in the post war period.

4.4.3.5. Attendance of staff meetings

As I spent the longest period of time at KIWEPI, I had the opportunity to attend up to three staff meetings. This gave me an opportunity to learn about the range of activities KIWEPI was undertaking at the time. I was also able to build rapport with staff members and gain a deeper understanding of their knowledge of KIWEPI's activities. This is how I found out about the above mentioned community dialogues that were held in collaboration with UWONET. After staff meetings, I was able to follow up with particular staff members to find out more about the projects they were involved in and seek their assistance with setting up interviews, focus groups or accessing organisational documents.

While at WOPI-U in Lira I offered to assist with convening a meeting between WOPI-U and other organisations who were part of a district Women's Task Force who were monitoring the implementation of the PRDP. My presence in this meeting helped me gain insight on the range

of concerns women's groups had about government-led peace efforts. Discussions included an exploration of how best they could monitor local government expenditure on post conflict recovery processes that were part of the government's PRDP. I learnt that one main approach of the task force was to make input on the allocation of finances by communicating with female councillors who were involved in local government budgeting processes at district and sub county level.

In summary, the aforementioned 'immersion' in the field helped with networking, locating participants for this study, building trust and credibility in the research I was undertaking as well as deepening my understanding of the context and its challenges.

4.5. Positionality and self-reflexivity

In line with post-structuralism, I understand subjectivity as "an embodied, multifaceted and fluid experience of the self that is shaped by and shapes the social world" (Rice, 2009: 246). With this framing of subjectivity, I am acutely aware of the significance of my own background and interests as a Zambian woman who has been part of non-governmental spaces and women's activism in several countries on the continent. In 2008, as a lecturer and researcher at the African Gender Institute (AGI), University of Cape Town, I conducted research on 'gendered security' for women in diverse settings (slums, refugee settlements, migrant routes, conflict zones, and peacekeeping initiatives). AGI partnered with Isis-WICCE in Uganda and worked with 21 women peace activists from six countries – Uganda, Zambia, Burundi, Kenya, Namibia, and South Africa. This research involved critical reflection on meanings of peace and conflict as understood by 'women activists' and their engagement with government-led peace efforts.[12] The research used interactive reflective writing exercises to draw on participants' lived experiences of creating peace. This research offered an intellectual 'space' and social network that expanded my understanding of and interest in women's peace groups and feminist theorisations of peace and conflict. At the time of the study, I was a board member of Isis-WICCE (up until 2016). This gave me an opportunity to have an 'insider' experience of institutional politics of 'peace work' in the context of 'African-based' women's organisations in general as well as the particularities of Uganda's unfolding history of feminist organising and 'peace activism' in a context of armed conflict and militarism.

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[12] As a result of this research project, three articles were published in *Feminist Africa 14: Rethinking Gender and Theories of Violence* (Bennet, 2010). See pieces by Pillay (2010) and Dempers (2010).

My institutional and ideological 'closeness' to the research process required continual reflexive evaluation of my own beliefs and the relative power my subjectivities might have had in shaping my relationship with research participants. Cockburn (2010: 141) states that:

> A stronger version of objectivity could be achieved by combining the view from below with enquiry that was reflexive, by researchers who named and clearly situated themselves, coming clean about power, interests and values, as informative about the subject and source of knowledge as about the studied objects.

Reflexivity helped reveal subtle (and perhaps not so subtle) ways in which my own subjectivity could create 'silences' that will affect data collection and analysis. In order to address this, I took detailed notes during my visits to Uganda. These notes have formed a part of the 'data' that was collected and analysed alongside transcribed interviews and focus group discussions. I was able to reflect on and question my own positionality and the ideas that I had about the research topic at the start of my fieldwork and trace changes that may have occurred. The notes taken also help reveal grids of power relations that influenced methods, interpretations, and knowledge production. These notes taken on 18th December 2013 point to a sense of 'strangeness' I experienced at the start of data collection:

> *There is nothing like being away from one's usual context to develop a habit of self-reflection, reading and writing. I needed this time to myself and my 'Ugandan intrigue and self-adventure' that I seem to have inadvertently chosen for myself. From these three weeks in the north by myself, where nobody knows my name, I am developing a routine of exercise, reading, writing, and meditation. Uganda's magic of anonymity and seemingly familiar air makes this possible. Reading (about) the history of Uganda is fascinating. Not sure why I am drawn to Africa's 'colonial' histories. I always have this sense of intrigue and 'ahaaaa' moments when I read it. It reveals so much about my experiences of cities I have inhabited (Lusaka, Cape Town, now Kampala) and our contradictory displays of 'modernity' and 'development' that is displayed in our dress, food and political allegiances….*

After taking part in a community health assessment programme in Lira on 11th December 2013 I wrote down these reflective notes about my research topic:

> *Listening to all this information about health services, I am wondering when 'peace' is more about general 'development' than peace. When is the point at which there is less focus on questions of 'trauma', 'dialogue', 'violence that occurred during war', and*

more about specific health needs that have to do with context of war? When is responding to 'SGBV' no longer really about building/making 'peace', is it always about peace as Robinah said this morning? If so, why come all the way to north Uganda to ask these questions about 'gender' and 'peace'? Is there something about a certain history of patriarchy and militarism that I need to understand, contextualise in order to understand what it means to prevent or respond to 'SGBV' in Northern Ugandan communities? I need to pay attention to interpretations of founders of women peace groups – their experience and interpretation of 'violence' and 'peace' in context of 'war experiences'?

I also wrote notes after each interview. This aided my reflection on nuances of the interview and the ways in which my own positionality shaped the conversation. These notes point to the attention I paid to shifts in my ideas that occurred after certain interviews:

> *Well my initial sense was that her answers were so obvious...in some sense there was too much that I had heard or read before. Not sure why this is so much of a concern, except that I wondered if I was not probing deep enough especially about her perspectives on peace and why she thought counselling is central to peace for women. There were also some familiar points about gender social roles, such as patrilineal inheritance systems, expectations of domesticity for women, dominance and 'breadwinner-hood' for men. It would have been useful to probe further on this and find out more detail about Lango gender meanings? She did mention the issue of men being expected to drink and socialise collectively in public. Sit in circles and drink brewed beer together. Most of these roles are linked to marriage....expected I guess? The interview got me thinking of feminism and peace being about naming and confronting different kinds of patriarchy – in this case it is patriarchies embedded in Lango gendered social roles and those that have manifested in violence and militarism that have been learnt in resistance to political isolation of nilotic communities in the north? There is also patriarchies that have become part of organised militarism – militia groups armies and state systems?*(Field Notes, Lira, 14 December 2013).

I became increasingly aware of the links between this deep reflection and critical reflection on my own power and positionality. I was deeply 'drawn into' my research through my initial visits. I was especially impacted by participants' graphic depiction of their horrific accounts of the war and how it affected them and their families and communities. Upon return to Cape

Town, I embarked on counselling sessions as there was the possibility of secondary traumatisation from listening to these stories of extreme violence.

4.6. Data analysis framework

I used thematic analysis to make sense of the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 6) "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail". Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions generated 'small stories' (Georgakopoulou, 2016) about participants' interpretations and experiences of armed conflict and peacebuilding. Thematic analysis assisted in revealing embedded themes in these short stories that revealed 'gendered' meanings of 'peace'. Each major theme related to the research objectives, while sub-themes represented some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 10). This was done manually.

The first stage of the analysis involved reading and re-reading transcripts to familiarise myself with the data. Some of this was done during the transcription process. I noted down initial ideas that emerged from the data, especially those that kept coming up. The second stage involved coding, which entailed noting interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set. These I called 'category factors' that formed elements of potential themes.

Each theme was reviewed in the process of writing up the analysis chapters. I checked how the themes related to the category factors and then generated a thematic diagram of the analysis. These diagrams are included as Figures (listed in Table of Contents) in the chapters that present the analysis of the findings. As I reviewed the analysis chapters, I further refined each theme.

4.7. Ethical considerations

4.7.1 Gatekeeping

I obtained ethical clearance from the University of Cape Town's Department of Social Development's Ethics Committee; the Doctoral Degree Board who accepted the proposal; and the Ugandan Government. The connection I had with Isis-WICCE in Uganda also helped to facilitate entry into the research communities.

4.7.2. Avoidance of harm

The research topic had the potential of harm that came with the possibility of participants recalling their past involvement or memories of armed conflict. This could have resulted in re-

traumatisation of research participants. As discussed by Wagner et al (2012), specific steps were taken to prevent any inconvenience with regards to time commitments as well as any perceived stress related to discussing sensitive topics. I made the participants aware of this during the process of consent at the start of the interview. I also did my best to minimise harm by referring research participants (who seemed visibly upset or traumatised) to psychosocial support services/options within the communities they lived in. I had a list of organisations that could assist. I was also aware that research participants were also experienced peace activists who had experience with trauma healing themselves.

4.7.3. Informed consent

Participants received consent forms prior to focus group discussions and interviews. The process of soliciting consent began with a conversation held with participants prior to the signing of the form. I outlined the purpose of the research; time needed for the interview; what is expected of the participant; the risks and benefits of this study; how the data will be handled; and how confidentiality and anonymity would be provided for (Wagner et al., 2012). This process helped ensured that there was no coercion to participate. Where necessary, the content of the consent form was adjusted together with the research participants so that there was shared clarity on the parameters of the study.

4.7.4. Partial Deception

My role and identity as a researcher was clarified at various levels. However, I did not want my involvement as a board member of Isis-WICCE to jeopardise the nature of the participation and the responses. Isis-WICCE played a role in the support and even creation of these peace groups at some stage. Thus, where possible, I withheld my connection to Isis-WICCE in order to neutralise the power differential and to reduce the possibility of participants feeling pressurised to participate. Where direct questions were asked about my connection to Isis-WICCE I divulged my connection to this organisation and went on to assure participants that that they could decide to withdraw if they wished to. However, all agreed to proceed with the interviews. Some participants expressed that my involvement with Isis-WICCE made them feel that I was better able to understand their situation. I did my best to adopt a neutral conversational approach when participants shared their traumatic experiences (Wagner et al., 2012). This display of empathy facilitated a trusting and caring atmosphere. With this, I was able to maintain a collaborative, non-hierarchical, emancipatory approach to the data collection process.

4.7.5 Power and social justice

I was keenly aware of the power imbalances that needed to be addressed in this research, hence the route I took with partial deception. Other power considerations included creating equity in the research process through sharing experiences. Participants were made aware that they had the 'power' to provide much needed information and the researcher facilitated a process whereby participants could honestly share their experiences. As researcher, I was keenly aware of the cultural aspects of power in a patriarchal society (Wagner et al., 2012).

4.7.6 Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality

I ensured anonymity by using pseudonyms to represent research participants. The individual participants' identity was not made known to others. Participants agreed to having their verbatim quotes published without having their true identities revealed. The context in which these interviews were conducted also ensured confidentiality. Interviews were carried out in private spaces to protect the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality in keeping with ethical research. Where respondents requested that some sensitive aspects of their responses be withheld for reasons of security/safety, such information was not reported. All information was reported with accuracy.

4.7.7 Storage of Findings

The data gathered was stored in a secure place that was only accessible to the researcher. The transcriptions were viewed by the researcher and her supervisor and will be kept for a time period deemed feasible, after which they will be destroyed. These transcriptions may be accessible to the external examiners of this study if required. The respondents were made aware that this research may be published as a book or through various journal articles and that the respondents' identity will not be revealed through these publications.

4.8. Limitations of the study

Although I selected relatively small samples, they were rich in information as a result of an in-depth exploration of feminist notions of peacebuilding which was the main objective. I used an iterative approach where I would go back to respondents several times if it became necessary, to probe for meaning and clarification.

The limitations of qualitative research of this nature is that it is time-consuming. I conducted interviews over a period of four months during three visits to Northern Uganda: in December 2013, December 2014 and January to February 2015. Due to various reasons, the collection of the data could not be immediately followed up with the actual analysis of the data hence the writing process was delayed by 1 and a half year. This was mainly due to my teaching commitments and time required to deal with the psychological impact of the interviews, that resulted in periods of 'writers block'. The gaps in data collection allowed enough time to transcribe and analyse data but meant that many changes occurred in between visits and these changes could not all be taken into consideration. In addition, a mixed methodology would have contributed to a greater richness of data (qualitative and quantitative) that would have produced statistical data which would have enriched the study through statistical analysis. The limitations inherent in the use of interpreters has already been discussed. However, the actual advantages of using interpreters far outweighed the limitations.

4.9. Chapter summary

This chapter presented an in-depth overview of the methodology undertaken for this study. The following two chapters will present the main findings of the study which have been subsumed under the two chapter headings, namely: Chapter 5 - Gender Flux, War and Peace building and Chapter 6 -Theorising Peace building from Women Activists' Perspective.

CHAPTER 5: GENDER FLUX, WAR AND PEACE BUILDING

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines women's unique contributions to peace through the initiatives carried out by peace groups they established during the war. These findings are linked to objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 (see Chapter 1, section 1.4) of this thesis, and specifically to questions in sections B and C of the interview guide (see Appendix 1, page 221) that elicited information about participants' experiences of the war at the time they founded their peace groups. The approach adopted for presenting the findings is an integration of various data sources. Quotes from individual interviews in the form of narratives are presented and further compared/contrasted with the focus group data obtained from community members who benefited from the aforementioned peace groups. Further, I discuss the findings in the light of theoretical assumptions about constructions of gender identities, agency, and resilience in post-conflict contexts.

Table 7 presents a specific theme that was identified after data analysis; namely, gender flux, war and peacebuilding. The theme was conceptualised after the first stage of analysis of all the findings. These include stories about participants experiences of the war that were recurrent across data sets. The wording of the theme was informed by the following category factors: men who were absent (recruited into fighting forces or killed) or became 'passive' in family; changes in the women's roles within family, that was linked to mass displacement and violence of various forms; changes in family structures, especially clan and lineage; and descriptions of social and material agency of women who founded peace groups. An emergent category that did not result from explicit questions in the interview guide was that of various explanations about the ways in which masculinities were affected during the war. Even though I did not ask what happened to men and masculinities during the war there was repeated mention of changes in masculinities that continued to affect the way communities survived in the post war period. Table 7 summarises this.

Section 5.2 titled 'Organisational beginnings, war and gender flux' outlines data that revealed category factors that were about the effects of the war on gender identities. This includes an outline of quotes that point to what occurred in the lives of the research participants just before

they founded their women's peace groups that are included in this study. The section also outlines participants narration of the kinds of 'gender flux' they experiences and witnesed during the war. This included recurrent quotes about the participants perceptions about the effects of the war on men and masculinities
Section 5.3 tilted 'Institutional 'her' stories of agency and survival' outlines data that was about the social and material agency of women who founded women peace groups. The section outlines participants stories about the circumstances they faced that framed the activities they undertook. The section discusses the social and material circumstances they faced that lead to the formation of the women peace groups they founded.

Section 5.4 titled 'War, shifts in families and femininities' outlines data that explained the kinds of changes that occurred in the families of women who founded peace groups. It provides contextual detail about the kinds of material and social agency that occurred and how this was closely connected with changes in local feminine social roles.

Table 7: Theme – Gender flux, war and peacebuilding

Theme	Relevant Objectives addressed	Category factors which informed this theme
Gender Flux, War and Peacebuilding	Objective 1 (partly) – investigate particular histories of armed conflict Objective 2 – examine women's experiences of armed conflict in Northern Uganda. Objective 3 (partly)– explore women's contribution to peacebuilding. Objective 4 - ascertain the various challenges women experience in peacebuilding.	Effect of war on gender identities Men as absent (recruited into fighting forces or killed) and/or 'passive' in family. Femininity and shifts in family. Social and material agency of women who founded groups. Emergent Category: Apparent destabilisation of masculinities.

5.2. Organisational beginnings, war and gender flux

Nine of the seventeen key informants of the community peace groups (listed in Table 1) were founder members who lived in the towns when they formed these community-based peace groups. All except one were founded between 1998 and 2006. This was a period in which one of the largest rebel groups, the – LRA was most actively fighting in Northern Uganda. One exception, WAN, was founded after this period, in 2011. The LRA regularly looted the local populations' food supplies and targeted men and children for abduction to join them as new recruits. A staff member of KIWEPI who was abducted by LRA soldiers at the age of 12 described what her life was like during this period:

> *…So during that time, we were taken to Sudan. So after one week, when we were in Sudan...the army, the combination of the army in Sudan, that is the rebels actually, that is the Dinkas with the support of the UPDFs of Uganda, went and attacked the barracks where we were. So we had to flee and then we crossed to Juba. So there where we stayed, the experiences…it was just...fighting…So during that period, that was 1996, we roamed around Acholi, Lango,...fighting, moving and just like looting things...So during that time, either if you cannot fight like others, you are killed. If you try to escape and they get you, you are killed. Or else if you get a commander who might sympathise with you, canes you badly. Sometimes even the effects of that caning, you die* (Key Informant X, staff, KIWEPI, December 2015).

A founder member of KIWEPI describes what would happen when returning from school:

> *The fear was the government soldiers and the rebels because the ambushes were too rampant. ..They could do a lot of ambushes...They can kill you. When you manage to come into town on your way back, maybe when you carry some salt, you carry some piece of soap, they would make you eat it. People could swallow* (Key Informant L, founder, KIWEPI, December 2015).

She explained how she and other school children would hide from rebels and government soldiers in the cassava bushes for weeks and survived on secretly smuggled food from nearby family members who knew where the children were hiding:

> *You know how fresh they (cassava leaves) are and the leaves are still big, big. And in the morning because the only place, the only better place you can hide is under those cassava plantations…They (family) could only sneak for us and take for us food in the bush. We stayed in that kind of life for more than a month and when it stabilised, then we came back home* (Key Informant L, founder, KIWEPI, December 2014).

At the time, the government army also assumed that local populations were covertly part of the LRA or were supporting them. In order to have greater control over this situation, the government forced civilians who lived in rural areas, into poorly resourced places that were initially referred to as 'protected villages'. These were later formally called IDP camps and were located in Lira, Gulu and Kitgum. It is in these towns that most of the community-based peace groups were formed to address the humanitarian crisis that was developing.

At the time of establishing these peace groups, most of the women had lived through many years of the war. Those who were not abducted and managed to complete their secondary education became teachers or civil servants and were still holding these positions at the time of founding the peace group. Apart from the founders of WAN, almost all of them were active (and holding fairly high-ranking positions) in faith-based organisations such as Mothers Union, Catholic Church, or Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative.

These women lived in a house (or owned land) near or within a town that people were fleeing to, to seek refuge. The average age of the key informants at the time of data collection was 42.5 years. The property they owned was either linked to their job or to their husband's wealth. Their marital status varied, as they were women who were married, widowed, never married, divorced, or cohabiting with their partners or separated (still married but living apart).

As can be seen from Table 8, the majority of the key informants had tertiary level education, were of the Acholi ethnic group and were Christian.

Table 8: Selected characteristics of founders and staff of six women's community-based peace groups

17 Informants (as per Table 1, first column of interviewees)		
Average age of Informants 42.5years		
Range of number of children per Informant 0-8		
Characteristics		**Persons per characteristic**
Gender	Male	3
	Female	14
Position in organisation	Founder	10
	Director & Founder	1
	Staff	3
	Intern	2
Education	Tertiary	13
	Less than tertiary	3
Marital status	Married	4
	Never married	3
	Married but living apart	1
	Widowed	4
	Divorced	2
	Cohabiting	1
	No data	1
Religion	Christian	13
	Muslim	12
	No data	1
Ethnicity	Acholi	10
	Langi	2
	Luo (Lwo)	2
	Samia	1
	No data	1
Abducted during the war	Yes	2
	No	20
Living location during war	Town	10
	IDP camp	1
	Farm	3
	No data	2

A staff member of FIDA, an organisation that offered legal advice to women in Northern Uganda from 2008 summarised the kinds of issues they had to deal with:

> *We heard a lot of women being thrown off their land ... maybe because they were staying in the camps so they did not know where their husbands came from. At the time we opened the office, there were very many women who say "I am looking ... I was told that my husband comes from this area"... You (women who sought advice) married the man, he died, he was buried in the camp, so now you trying to trace his roots. ... then we had the women who were unmarried. You meet someone in the camp. You have children, now the man has died but you cannot go back with these children to your home because culturally our children are supposed to get land from their fathers. ... The widows. Yes, maybe you were married at that time. When you were leaving your home to go to the camp, your husband was present. Now your husband died during the war and you leaving the camp going back home and now your in-laws do not want you there. That is another…. Then we also have the category of the returnees. That is also a very big category of the girls who were captured. They coming back home and they have children. These children, some of them know the father, some of them don't know their fathers. You coming back home with your children and the people at your home are saying "no, you cannot come back"* (Key Informant M, staff, FIDA, January 2015).

Harris' (2012) research on family structures and gender-age systems and social change in Northern Uganda suggests that before the war men held power as occupiers of the superior position in the gender hierarchy, while (older) women held implicit power within households and the patrilineage as mothers, aunts, and sisters-in-law. Men's power was associated with their role as fathers, uncles, and elders of patrilineal clans. Ownership and control of land was central to this power. Boys and young men were relied upon for lineage continuity as well as social and economic support in old age. With displacement, violence, and loss of livelihoods, this masculine dominance was significantly destabilised. Most informants explained that a combination of forceful recruitment of men into the rebel armies, rape and forced marriage of girls and women, looting of cattle and other property, contributed to a destabilisation of masculine identities amongst the Acholi and Langi societies. They explained that this left women with no alternative than to respond to the dire needs of those left orphaned, raped and destitute.

Even though fewer men (20 percent of informants) were interviewed, this express reference to how the war affected men's social and economic positioning was recounted by both female and male informants. All referred to having witnessed the high involuntary recruitment of men by the fighting forces. Others reported that some men stayed in rural areas to protect their land and cattle. For example, a founder of WOPI- U explained that many men stayed behind in rural areas in an attempt to fulfil their role as protector of land and property and the women moved into towns with their children to seek protection:

> *If you moved along the road as people are being displaced and running, you see a woman running with a mattress on her head, with a saucepan, a child on her back and others she's holding their hands. At times you would look around and not see a man with her. She's travelling for the protection of the children and where she is travelling now she has to look for how to feed the children. Most men first remain back in the villages…And that is one of the reasons these women are carrying this responsibility more than the men.* (Key Informant J, founder and board member, WOPI-U, December 2013).

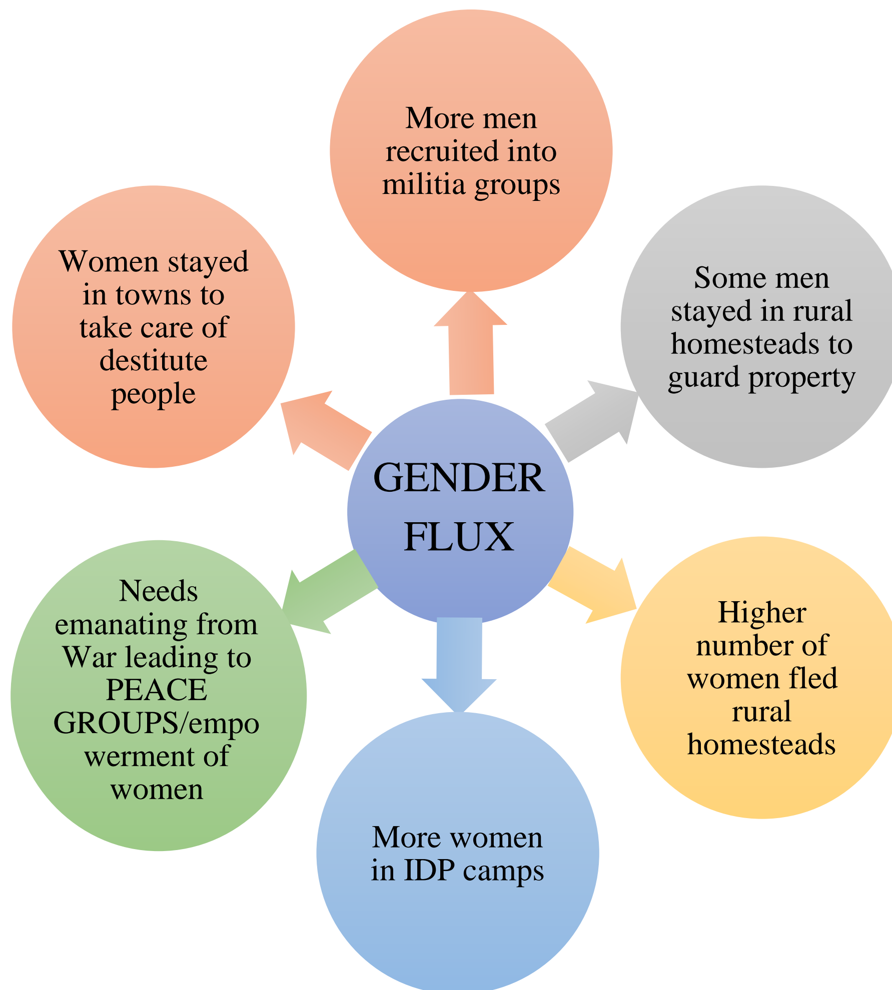
A staff member of WOPI-U corroborated this statement when she referred to her experiences as a child in her home village. Her parents would send her and her sibling to sit on the road to listen out for rumours about possible raids by cattle rustlers and militia groups. When it was clear that more raids were imminent, her parents put her and her siblings on a lorry and sent them to stay with an uncle. They were later taken to her grandmother who lived in a village called Kole. Her parents remained in the village to construct a house with her two older brothers. Her mother eventually left the family homestead in the village too but fell very ill enroute. She explained what happened to her father, older brothers and uncles:

> *…they took everything from them, including their clothes. In fact they undressed them, and my father was given shorts, and being a very tall and huge man he was putting on shorts. So the news reached us in the village there that, our parents were killed. Because for them they were new in the village they didn't know how to hide. They were still carrying their things, people were running away. Then they were grabbed and these people took everything, they had nothing, not even clothes on, their cattle, everything went* (Key Informant E, staff member, WOPI-U, December 2013).

5.2.1. Gender flux and factors that encouraged women's activism

Figure 2 below illustrates the key issues emanating from the participants' narratives. The diagram provides some understanding of the kinds of 'gender flux' that occurred during the war and women's initiatives that happened alongside this flux.

Figure 2: Gender Flux - Factors that predisposed women to collective peace efforts



These findings resonate with Dolan (2002, 2009), Finnström (2006) and Harris' (2012) studies that allude to the military approach of the National Resistance Army of Museveni, the Lord's Resistance Army[i], and the Ugandan government army (UPDF) that entailed stealing cattle, looting property, and maiming and killing people they suspected to be soldiers (in the case of the LRA), rebels or supporters of rebels (in the case of NRA and UPDF)[13]. These forms of violence resulted in the loss of cattle and the abduction of (mostly) boys and young men that

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[13] As stated in the literature review on page 35, the NRA was transformed into UPDF. So in some instances the NRA and UPDF were the same institution, albeit with different names.

contributed to a destabilisation in many men's sense of masculine authority (Blattman & Annan, 2010).

Two key informants highlighted the process through which men's authority was undermined and how women took the lead in forming a response to the situation:

> *That one is hard. I don't know because even during the war period women were the ones working because men they were saying, 'Ahhh if we go there they will abduct us.' So most of the time it was women who were working and doing a lot of things…*(Key informant Y, founder member, KICWA, February 2015).

> *I think mainly because the rebels targeted men and I think it kind of subdued the men, their thinking…they couldn't do much they couldn't think outside the box. On the other hand I think it freed the women to take up these challenges. …once people were put into camps I think their manhood was no more, they couldn't rise up to any [sic] and they became children. And I think that gave rise to the woman's cause because they had to put food on the table.* (Key Informant Z, staff member, KICWA, February 2015)

> *The culture here, it is the men are the providers for their families, they are the protector, they are supposed to provide security. But having nothing completely with barehanded they could not protect, because most of the children were abducted in their presence. And if you try to resist you are killed there and then. So, it is like they have lost their manhood, completely. So that is what happened* (Key Informant C, founder, KIWEPI, December 2013).

These findings corroborated research about a sense of powerlessness amongst men that was further reinforced when (in the mid-1990s) the Ugandan army forced approximately 2 million people in rural Acholiland into 'protected villages' – IDP camps (Dolan, 2009). Government army officials used this as an opportunity to further victimise Acholi communities and prevent them from supporting the LRA (Finnström, 2006 in Harris, 2012). With no land to till or cattle to herd, most men resorted to excessive consumption of alcohol and gambling (Harlacher et al., 2006; Liu Institute for Global Issues, 2005). Kizza e.t al.'s (2012) research on suicide rates amongst men in IDP camps in Northern Uganda revealed that most suicide cases were a result of men's sense of lost dignity and social worth. One participant described her encounter with a man she met in an IDP camp when she went to meet some women:

One time I went on the field very early in the morning, around nine to the camp and I found most of the women I had wanted to talk to had gone out to look for food and the men were completely drunk and there was an elderly one, so I went to him and asked where are the women and he says they have gone out to look for food. And I say, 'Muze [sic]how come you are so drunk, do you know it is still nine? Why are you drunk why don't you go together with your wife to help her to bring food?' And he just stared at me and said, 'My daughter you just don't know what has just happened to me, I am a man I should be taking care of my children and my wives and do you know what has just happened to me, I've just been reduced to the status of a dog. This is the small hut where I am living, with my wife and all my children. Can you believe that? How can me as a normal man continue living when I know that I am so helpless that I cannot even bring some cassava for my children? I am drinking because that is the only way to cope with the situation, that is what is making me… at least to sometimes… I tend to forget my suffering through drinking (Key Informant K, founder, People's Voice for Peace, PVP, December 2014).

Older men felt they had been deprived of their male role identity while younger men attempted to reinstate their status by abandoning school and opting for early marriage. They ended up being caught between the social pressures of having to provide for their families and a context in which income was scarce. These findings were similar to that of Kizza et al, 2012: 10) who found that men who were displaced during the war "…were trapped in an identity vacuum in which they were neither men nor children – a dilemma they tried to solve through risky social behaviour." This dilemma was exacerbated when they saw their wives and daughters selling sex to survive. This further stigmatised both the men (for not being able to provide for their families) and their wives and daughters (for having sex with multiple parties and not conforming to local norms of respectability). Some were further demoralised when they witnessed their wives or daughters being raped by soldiers or the LRA. In some instances, men were further humiliated when they themselves were raped by government soldiers (Dolan, 2002: 74-5). Interestingly, the study found that this sense of powerlessness was also present amongst men who lived outside the camps.

Two founder members of WOPI-U lamented the men's apparent lack of response to the crisis of displaced people who arrived in Lira town:

…when I looked around,… I mean receiving the displaced and three quarters were women. Especially when someone who has received some training and has some little income, they would take it up seriously but the men even when they had all the money, unless the wife takes the initiative, on their own very few would feel responsible for these people. There are instances where you would hear, 'so and so's mother is on the street and he is a well to do person, even so and so's relatives are like this.' Very few men in this town that we knew got concerned about the displaced people (Key Informant J, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

…[W]omen were basically left to do everything. They were the breadwinners; they were the ones who were supposed to look after the families, the men could not do anything they were either on the run or in hiding and could not do anything. That also has contributed to the reasons that the men these days behave the way they are…they are still feeling redundant (Key Informant S, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Many informants spoke about men who could not cope with living in IDP camps. Some men also struggled to cope with witnessing destitution that was created by poorly managed and under resourced camps. Even after the war subsided. Similar to previous research on life in IDP camps (Dolan, 2002, 2009; Harris, 2012), I found that there was a perception that men's sense of powerlessness was reinforced by a growing number of women's empowerment programmes instituted by international development organisations such as the World Food Programme, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Red Cross, Oxfam, and others. As part of their attempt to 'empower' women they chose to distribute food directly to women and train them on gender equality and their rights as equal partners in the home. Men's social role as household heads was thus further undermined when women incrementally outnumbered men in food distribution efforts and economic support projects. One staff member of KIWEPI recalled finding out that her mother used her name to register herself in more than one of these programmes:

There were only programmes which target women, and men were excluded. Now when I go back home to visit my mother, because she is a widow and for me I am the only child, a girl also who is not yet married. I find … my name is written or registered with Red Cross….and Oxfam... So, the women were getting a certain kind of emphasis during the war and also after the war in terms of new programmes for the community (Key Informant X, staff, KIWEPI, January 2015).

Founder members referred to men's apprehension about these women's empowerment programmes. It was not uncommon for women who took part in village savings and loans associations or gender training workshops to experience resistance from men in their families, especially from their husbands.

> *Actually, ... whenever they go to a gathering, you can imagine there was some kind of opposite teaching that would influence the household and that is how I think the power struggle within the household came about. Because the man of the house (would say) you cannot go to a gathering without my authority and I think that is what is even now happening in our community like in the villages. Because for you to attend any gathering or any women's activity you first need to seek for the permission of the man, ya, of the husband* (Key Informant B, staff, KIWEPI, December 2013)

Other women founder members were concerned about this appearance of the loss of men's power and privilege:

> *It was really not normal that their men be (sic) seated there looking at the sky and their women running around…You know somehow in a crisis it would be the women who would think outside the box, because the men were just used to their power and their privileges and now suddenly, they saw that power and the privileges going and they could not handle it.* (Key Informant V, former staff, Isis-WICCE, February 2015)

When asked about men's inclusion in group saving schemes that were initially designed for women, women in Agoro sub-county complained that *"men save with their stomachs"* (Focus Group Discussion, Agoro sub-county, January 2015). Their point was that women use the funds to pay for household expenses such as school fees or investing in seeds, while men would use the money on short term needs that fulfilled their personal needs, such as alcohol, cigarettes, or other personal items. When asked what they found useful about men's involvement, they referred to men's ability with numbers and being able to write since they were literate in English. Men were thus considered useful for measuring the distance between crops or keeping written records of savings made by the group. This is why men often held positions of secretary or treasurer in the savings group.

> *So in the Village Loan and Saving Association we have… 21 women to nine men to make 30. And in that also, the leadership of that group is a woman, but you find the difficulty is many women cannot write, so that position of secretary, all were dominated by men.* (Key Informant X, staff, KIWEPI, January 31).

These findings offer an interesting insight to a possible disruption of what Pierre Bourdieu (2001: 66) refers to as masculine dominance - a social world constructed around an androcentric world view. He refers to masculine dominance as an archaeological history of the masculine unconscious "…which constitutes women as symbolic objects whose being *(esse)* is being-perceived (*precipi*) and has the effect of keeping them in a permanent state of bodily insecurity, or more precisely, symbolic dependence." My findings suggest that the context of the war in Northern Uganda may has destabilised what Bourdieu calls *habitus.* There was a destabilisation of masculine ways of doing and being that were once 'functional' within a social field premised on masculine norms around land, cattle and clan systems. Men's gendered social realities were disrupted in ways that resulted in overt material changes for many women and this was argued (by key informants) to be one of the main reasons women founded the peace groups.

Founder members and staff of women peace groups were of the view that men's absence or inability to cope with social upheaval created a precarious social reality for many women, especially in terms of livelihood options. For example, several respondents referred to difficulties women faced in accessing land.:

At the time of the study, land acquisitions in Northern Uganda were particularly sensitive, occurring in the wake of long-standing displacement of the majority of the population and the resultant confusion about boundaries. As discussed in section 3.5 on page 52, this tension around land had 'gendered' consequences, especially for women whose access to land was intertwined with patriarchal patrilineal clan structures.

Women who were abducted during the war had an especially difficult experience of accessing land and reintegrating into the community. Many did not know (or could not find out) the clan of the father of their child. They were also not easily integrated into their fathers' clans:

> *The land conflict, we realised that as we visit them the issue of land here is a very hot issue in the sense that traditionally the women do not have access or control over land, you can only control land through your husband or through a brother or somebody but not directly as a woman. So we were trying to appeal to the clan leaders to sympathize with the child mothers and try to portion them land … And we were trying to appeal to them to portion some of the land to the child mothers so that they could do some of their farming from home. Because, traditionally they are supposed to farm from where they*

are married and not from home and at times they have clashed over land (Key Informant Z, founder, KICWA, February 2015).

*…as women if you leave home to go… you don't have your share of land at home, you are expected to have a share at your husband's place, now you actually - you only access the land you don't have any ownership over that land and then as soon as your husband dies it's either your children who can take over that land but not you. Now while the children grow up somebody maybe an uncle of the children, a brother-in-law is always in control of that land (*Key Informant W, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Women's limited access to land was further exacerbated by recent speculation about the presence of oil in Northern Uganda (Sjögren, 2014). The vast, fertile and possibly oil-rich land in Acholi has attracted the attention of prospective investors, who could easily take advantage of an impoverished population. There has thus been an increase in the number of controversial purchases and some women's claims to land have been found to compete with that of investors as well as clan leaders and family members.

One respondent (a staff member of FIDA) who has worked with many women's peace groups in Northern Uganda expressed the need to reconsider culturally defined patriarchal norms that affect women's possibility of owning land especially as a result of the war and its effects:

To start with children that were born in captivity… there's need for a shift, the mothers must also be allowed to have ownership, to be seen as valued stakeholders of the land and as valued parents and therefore can actually pass on their clan to their children and that is really fundamental in Africa. So patriarchy is alive and kicking and so you need to have a shift where people will say, "Let's create some exceptions" and have these children who were born probably out of rape and out of abduction and these are not children who chose to be born like this and the mothers would have loved to have a clan and the reality is that they don't know who the father is (Informant V, former staff, Isis-WICCE, February 2015).

But we have children who have names, but they don't have an identity. So, they also kind of don't have that belonging. Because our customs say that the children follow the father. And right now, we have women who have children who do not even know where their fathers are (Informant M, founder, FIDA, December 2014).

With their men absent, women experienced more constraints to accessing land and had to fend for themselves, their children and extended families with very little social and material support. This vulnerable social reality became even more precarious as women who had lost their husbands established relationships with other men:

> *Basically, girls being raped by their stepfathers. Women within this region, it is very rare that you going to find a woman having children by the same man. Most of them say most of the men were killed during the war so the men are few. So, you'll find she will go with whoever is going to take her. She has five children by another man and now she's going into a relationship with another man. So, you'll find, we had many of those cases coming in saying "oh, she has been defiled and it's her stepfather and she can't talk about it because her mother told her not to talk about it* (Informant M, staff, FIDA, February 2015).

One informant referred to a culture of violence perpetuated by boys and young men who grew up during the war and were familiar with looting, drug-taking and rape:

> *The boys, they move around town here, they do a lot of drugs, and they just take advantage of people simply because they can. Remember it's post-war. People have not really settled in their homes. People still have this fear that the rebels will come back. We have those who were taking advantage of the fact that the rebels are still around… There are people who still have guns up till today. So around that time we also had a lot of people going around... Yes there was a lot of robbery... They would rob you; they would rape you. They'll do anything. So we had many women also coming in because of rape. Not necessarily rape by men their age but also by young boys* (Informant M, staff, FIDA, February 2015).

Even though these young men no longer lived in IDP camps, they carried on with their anti-social behaviour with little concern for their immediate and extended family networks. A staff member of the Amnesty International office in Kitgum expressed his disappointment about these young boys who upon returning from militia groups remained unruly and dissatisfied with the reparation packages that they were given.

> *With the boys… what I've seen is with those boys is that they are wild, they are very wild. Even in the office here whenever they come, they don't speak to us in the way people speak because they are wild…Supposing they come and they ask, "So what can Amnesty do for us?" When we say, "At the moment we don't have programmes," and*

> *that is where they get sparked and they get annoyed… Sometimes they feel like beating us but they cannot… and sometimes they feel because you know we have given them our Amnesty certificates and sometimes they even tear it in front of us and they say, "This thing is useless because you are not giving us anything* (Informant R, staff, Amnesty International, Kitgum office, February 2015).

The question for the researcher is: what theoretical significance does this flux in gender relations have? Butler's (2009) book on "Frames of War" questions the specific mechanisms of power through which life is produced during war. She questions what new norms are possible during war and how they are brought about. She states that:

> …a living figure outside the norms of life not only becomes the problem to be managed by normativity, but seems to be that which normativity is bound to reproduce...It falls outside the frame furnished by the norm, but only as a relentless double whose ontology cannot be secured, but whose living status is open to apprehension (Butler, 2009:8).

The context of war in Northern Uganda exposed communities to certain kinds of social and political forms that seemed to shift dominant claims of sociality about heterosexual norms. When I asked women (who founded peace groups) why they formed peace groups that focused on women, their responses were not predominantly about changes in their own social realities as women, but rather about changes in what they interpreted as men's social realities. They focused on the way the war affected masculinities and then explained how this impacted them as women. Men's weakened access to land, their strained relationships within the clan, and loss of cattle occasioned changes in women's social reality within the domain of heterosexual family ties. Women's attempts to cope in this post-war situation of vulnerable or insecure masculinities could be theorised as a '…relentless double whose ontology cannot be secured, but whose living status is open to apprehension' (Butler, 2009:8). By initiating projects that offered social and material support for women while simultaneously affirming non-abusive masculinities, women's lives seemed to become relatively stable despite still reproducing patriarchal gender norms. The following section offers an analysis of this development with a focus on women peace activists' experiences of founding the peace groups and concomitant changes that occurred in families and in performance of femininities.

5.3. Institutional 'her' stories of agency and survival

Most women who founded peace groups were already living in relative stability in towns and could thus support those who had fled to these towns, from the fighting in remote areas. The material stability of these women who founded these peace groups was linked to having a formal job, ownership or access to land, or a house in town. Those who worked in the civil service (mostly as teachers or administrators) were more likely to live in a relatively large (two to three roomed) government-owned house with a yard. Their social status was linked to spheres of influence they held in the community (as teachers, civil servants, church members, wives or daughters of civil servants) as well as their position (for example, as sister, mother, wife, and so on) in extended family networks, and their 'literacy status' generally signified by proficiency in spoken or written English.

Figure 3: The material and social capital of founder members

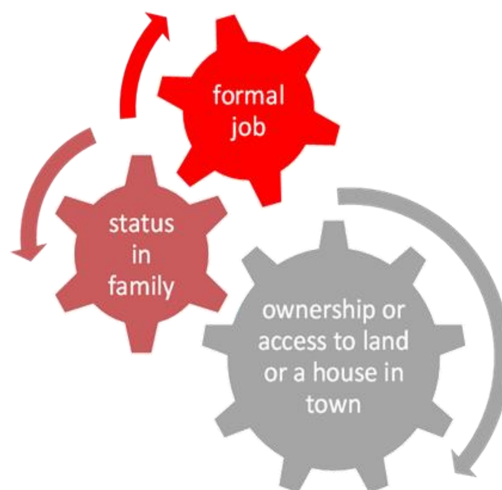


Table 9: Profile of founders and staff of women's community-based peace groups

Peace Group	Informants	Gender	Age	Highest Education	Marital Status	Religion	Ethnicity	Living Location during the war	Employment	Affiliations to other community/organisations
KIWEPI	KIA (founder)	F	57	Less than Tertiary	Widow	Muslim	Acholi	Sudan (Refugee)	Unemployed	Religious Peace initiative Uganda Red Cross Society
	KIC` (founder)	F	Late 50s	Bachelor Education	Widow	Catholic	Acholi	Kitgum – Town	Head teacher at Secondary school in Kitgum	Senior leader in Church Member of Acholi Religions Peace initiative KIWEPI-won award Taught in 4 schools from 1998 Chair of district women's council 1998-2006
	KIL (founder)	F	44	Education Diploma /Secretarial Certificate Bachelor in Business Administration	Married	Christian	Acholi	Kitgum – Town	Secretary at District government office	-
	KIX (Staff)	F	30	Degree in Adult and Community Education	Married	Catholic	Acholi	Kitgum (Lamor sub county)	Head of Women Access to Justice programme in KIWEPI	
	KIB (sfaff)	F	Early 20s	Public Administration, Masters in Business Administration	Single	Catholic	Acholi	Kitgum-Town	Human resources and SCORE project (community mobiliser)	Volunteered for humanitarian project (food for the hungry and the bringing hope project, it deals with HIV) before joining KIWEPI in October 2011
	KID (Staff)	M	29	Degree in Public Administration and Management Master's in public administration and Management	Single	Catholic	Acholi	Kitgum		
	KIH (Intern)	F	Mid 20's	Secondary School	Married	Catholic		Kitgum	Intern at KIWEPI	

Table 9: Profile of founders and staff of women's community based peace groups (CONTINUED)

Peace Group	Informants	Gender	Age	Highest Education	Marital Status	Religion	Ethnicity	Living Location during the war	Employment	Affiliations to other community organisations
KICWA	KIY (founder)	F	59	Counselling (Diploma/Certificate unknown)	Widow	Christian protestant	Acholi	Kitgum-Town	Retired (Used to be a secretary at a school)	Member of women's' group that generate income from piggery Founder of the women's group
	KIU (volunteer)	F	25	Degree in Public Administration and Management	Married	Catholic	Acholi	Kitgum	Became Volunteer at KICWA in 2014	
	KIZ (Staff)	M	38	Tertiary - unknown		Protestant		Kitgum	Began to work with KICWA in 2002-2005, then from 2011 to time of interview	
WOPI-U	KIJ (founder)	F	53	Completing her Master's in Education, Planning & Management	Divorced	Anglican	Langi	Kitgum – Town	Head Teacher	Worked with International rescue committee Community development officer for local government
	KIS (founder)	F	55	Graduated. First woman to graduate in sub county	Married	Catholic	Langi	Lira-Town	Community Development Office, Local Government	
	KIW (founder)	F	43	Degree in Accounting	Married	Muslim	Langi	Lira (Refugee from Village)	Accountant for German International Organisation	-
	KIE (staff)	F	30	Degree in Development Studies & Certificate in administrative Law	Married	Anglican and Catholic	Langi	Lira	Staff member at WOPI since February 2012	
Peace Voice People (PVP)	KIK (founder)	F	63	Tertiary – unknown	Widow	Christian	Acholi	Gulu – Town	Consultant	Regional co-ordinator, Coalition for peace in Africa (COPA) Short listed for Nobel Peace Prize
Women's Advocacy Network	KIN (staff and founder)	F	30	Bachelor's degree in development studies	Married	Unknown (Could be Christian)	Acholi	Gulu- Town	Social Worker and Project gender	Won award for work with women in WAN
Live Again	KIT (founder)	F	51	Master's degree in Education, Administration and Planning	Unknown	Christian	Acholi	Kitgum - Town	Head teacher of Secondary School	Member of mothers' union Acholi Religion leaders peace initiative

Even those women who did not have the typical markers of material and social status (such as access/ownership of a house in town, literacy in English, formal education, or employment) had access to social networks and later linked up with those who were financially secure with formal education and literacy in English. For example, founders of KIWEPI took an interest in assisting abductees who arrived at the Amnesty International office in Kitgum. A founder member explained that many of the children who returned from captivity did not get sufficient resources to set them up for their future:

> *…we saw our children who had been abducted, if they came back from their captivities, this Amnesty Commission, they used to give them a certificate, some packets, some small packets for the resettlement. So we think when KIWEPI begin, we think what are we going to do with those children? Because [when] this package of this amnesty is finished they have nowhere to go…, so they can go back to school, we better talk to them and their family to go back to school. Those who cannot go back to school, we better try to look for something which can help them for their future, because some of them came with their children which they got from [the rebel soldiers in] the bush* (Key Informant A, Founder, KIWEPI, December 2013).

Another founder member of KIWEPI confirmed this concern for these young people:

> *We started saying, "how can we help this girls?". Then one time we agreed and each one of us started offering. Me, I can offer a saucepan. If somebody can't offer a cup of beans, somebody else can offer some piece of firewood. Why don't we come together as they come and they have nothing to eat, they have nowhere to go, they have nobody to talk with them. We get somewhere where we can talk with them. We get to know their problem, we get to know their backgrounds, their family members. If can connect them to their family members. So we started like that. And one lady, who was already passed away, she's called Paula [pseudonym] offered her home* (Key Informant L, founder, KIWEPI, December 2013).

Due to the fact that they lived in towns close to poorly resourced internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, all of the founders were inundated with requests for help from extended family members and the general community who sought refuge in or near their homes. All referred to a period when they felt like they had no choice but to ask for donations from friends and acquaintances to support their extended families and the increasing number of people who slept on verandas of schools and hospitals at night. They began to informally collect household items

such as soap, food, and other necessities to support displaced families, especially women and children:

> *At first, we started mobilizing clothes to give to the women who had run naked with naked children braving the cold and gave old clothes. Locally we mobilized from our own homes…and other churches in Kampala where we would come back with bags and sacks of clothes to the camps and distribute and when we sit and chat to the women they would tell us, you see our other need is this and that...we would tell the women we are coming here to visit on Saturday and then we would carry our bag of salt, boxes of soap, whatever we have been able to mobilize, cut-cut the soap into pieces, at least a piece of soap each. They can bathe for a day or so and feel fresh for a day or so, and salt, a socket of salt, 500 grams or so and issue out* (Key Informant J, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

KIWEPI quickly moved beyond short term material assistance (in the form of handouts) for internally displaced people to income generating activities and psychosocial support for formerly abducted women and their children (most of whom were born in captivity).

The formation of these peace groups was thus partly a response to an overwhelming humanitarian crisis and it was these women who already held some material and social status who reached out to those in need. These findings challenge stereotypical essentialised ideas of women as 'victims' and men as 'perpetrators' of political violence and armed conflict (Moser & Clark, 2001). Essentialisation of womanhood as passive victims of war has been critiqued by various authors (see Baines, 2017; Barry 2005; Charlesworth, 2008; El-Bushra, 2008; Pankhurst, 2003). The reasons women gave for founding their peace groups offers a nuanced analysis of women's agency beyond a passive interpretation of femininity and survival.

The following section offers a detailed description of each community peace group. I attempt to weave together institutional histories with personal stories of survival in order to offer an analysis of the complex subjectivities of the founders and staff of each peace group.

5.3.1 Women's Peace Initiative – Uganda (WOPI-U)

Formerly called Lira Women's Peace initiative (LIWEPI), WOPI-U was founded in early 2003 by a group of ten women who came together to rekindle the hope of bringing back peace, and development to Northern Uganda. The original ten members were later joined by other members comprising of social workers, religious leaders, teachers, civil servants and other

professionals making a total of about 40 members at the time actual field operations started. Initially, the main objective of LIWEPI was to help people in IDP camps deal with problems that displacement created and to generate hope for the future. They wanted to alleviate the suffering of women in the camp as well as address their needs.

When the women in camps moved out and were resettled, LIWEPI traced them and formed peace clubs in schools and women's clubs. At the time of the study, there were three peace clubs in schools, and seven women's peace clubs. Each club had about 100 members. These clubs conducted training in conflict management and counselling. They also engaged in collective farming, tailoring, and goat rearing to earn a living. At the time of the study, two of the women's groups managed to attract their own funding and had registered as separate community-based organizations. They still kept LIWEPI informed of their activities.

With the expansion of LIWEPI's activities, they changed the organisation's name to Women's Peace Initiative – Uganda [WOPI – U] in January 2012. Their activities broadened to include other issues related to reintegration of people who previously lived in camps. This entailed psychosocial support and income generation opportunities.

Focus group discussions with Agweng Women's peace club (founded in 2006) and a subgroup in Barlonyo found that being able to tell their stories had a psychosocial healing component and was perceived as counselling by the participants. They also engaged in micro-level conflict resolution initiatives by ameliorating tension between people in the community or intervening through dialogue sessions with conflicting parties. Due to the training, they received from WOPI-U they used basic conflict resolution practices to mediate between conflicting parties to solve disputes. The group also had one village loan and savings association and engaged in small-scale income generation activities like gardening and setting up small businesses. In Barlonyo, the sub-group met every week and had formed their own village savings network and scheme that supported both individual members' livelihoods and some of the activities in the group. For example, the group was able to buy stationery for the group's training sessions.

At the time of the study, WOPI-U was part of a group of organisations that were monitoring the implementation of the government-led Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP). They were part of a team initiated by Isis-WICCE in 2008 to ensure that women's needs and interests were addressed and that gender equality was treated as a priority for the peace, recovery and development efforts in north and north eastern Uganda. A Women's Task Force for a Gender Responsive PRDP (WTF) was constituted, comprising 21 women's organisations

with most working at the grassroots level and others at the national level with Isis-WICCE as the task force manager. WOPI-U was in charge of monitoring the implementation of PRDP in health facilities in Lira. During fieldwork in January 2013, I took part in a meeting at WOPI-U that sought to bring together various women's organisations in Lira district to assist in coordinating all involved in the Lira district women's task force. The meeting focused on reviewing the implementation of PRDP where addressing women's health needs in health facilities was concerned. Other members of the district task force monitored the implementation of PRDP in schools and assessed enrolment, retention and completion rates of girl children. Women's access to contract and salaried work was also monitored. The meeting offered insights into the range of organisations WOPI-U was in contact with and the sphere of institutional leverage they had in influencing government policy and practice.

Interviews with three founder members and one staff member offered the possibility of locating this institutional history and sphere of influence within and around the positionalities of particular women. These women's personal experiences of surviving the war intersected with their decision to found or work for WOPI-U. The staff member (Key Informant E) was 30 years old at the time of the study and began to work as a deputy coordinator for WOPI-U in 2012. Her previous work was with the International Rescue Committee in the West Nile where she worked with groups of women who were displaced. She said that this experience inspired her to continue to work with women in other organisations. She later worked on maternal health with another international NGO before she joined WOPI-U. She had a degree in Development Studies and a certificate in Administrative Law. Part of her studies were completed in Kampala because the war in the north made it hard for her to go to colleges in Lira or Gulu. She had three children of her own and looked after two children from her extended family, and had an in-law staying with her. A total of ten people lived with her. She grew up in a large family with 26 siblings on her fathers' side. The war had a direct impact on her and her family:

> *I can only remember a few things, but my siblings would tell us what really happened. Most of the stories… they were the ones telling us, me I was a kid. They would carry me on the back and run with me… after the cattle rustling…LRA war started…from that time we again started hearing that there were people cutting people's lips, cutting limbs,...arresting people and abducting children, girls , all age categories, they were abducting. So, we stayed in town. But still, we would...sometimes you keep hearing bombs eh, you keep hearing guns in the night. Sometimes we would also get out and stay outside. Then there was a time when these people came to town, they reached a*

school called Lango College, it's not very far. I think that was the climax of the war (Key Informant E, staff member, December 2013).

This staff member was motivated to work for WOPI-U because of her personal experiences of the war and her growing passion to assist women who experienced violence during the war. She began feeling this way when she worked for the International Rescue Committee:

> *Ok, now I worked with IRC, and I looked at what women were really going through because even the situation there, it was post-conflict. So I would see what the women were going through and I had a heart. I don't know if because I am a woman, I had a heart for working with women. Even most of the groups we established in IRC were for women. We had women groups. Then when I joined the other organisation, I also worked on a maternal health programme, so it was also basically about women. That's how I developed a passion for working for women and when I heard about the advert for WOPI, I read through and I thought Ok this is a women thing, let me…get there, this is the kind of work I want to do. Ya, that is what really motivated me, because it's a women's-based organisation, then I looked at peace, an holistic approach, that is why. I wanted to be focused not on only one thing, but to look at what makes up peace, what builds peace. Ya...*(Key Informant E, staff member, December 2013).

The three founder members I interviewed were much older (between 43 and 55 years old) and held middle management positions in relatively large institutions, namely head teacher, community development officer, and accountant for a German development agency. Key Informant J (KIJ) was a head teacher at a local school and had been teaching since 1984. She also held the position of treasurer in her clan. She was in the process of completing a Masters degree in Education and Planning Management. She is the youngest of 11 siblings and she supported several family members. At the time of the interview, she was taking care of eight people – her sister's four grandchildren; her brother's son and three unrelated, displaced persons who became destitute during the war. She explained that she had acquired three pieces of land, two in town and one in the rural area and thus had three homes. One home was the house she was allocated as a head teacher. She had one child of her own who had since grown up and moved out. During the war in 2003 she took in 36 people.

> *Besides my normal family members, I had 36 members and then the land where I am staying now, I had already bought it, but I had not yet developed it. So, I gave it to some people to stay there …3 other families stay there. So, it was a difficult period because*

> *one was to feed and maintain these people and two was to reassure them that things would settle in time* (Key Informant J, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

She explained that the founding of WOPI-U began with the practicalities of finding ways to provide food and clothes to those who sought refuge in her home and in the surrounding buildings in Lira town.

> *Locally we mobilized from our own homes. Another friend and founder…went to other churches in Kampala where she came back with bags and sacks of clothes to the camps and distributed them and when we sit and chat to the women they would tell us, you see our other need is this and that. …That is when we started, we would mobilize some little money raise like 10 000 each or something like that and we would tell the women we are coming here to visit on Saturday….* (Key Informant J, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

The second founder member I interviewed was Key Informant S (KIS). She was a community development officer which is the equivalent to head of department at district level. She supervised thirteen staff and had worked in local government for ten years. She also held the position of overall acting coordinator of WOPI-U for several years while she worked full time in local government. This meant that she often had to conduct work for WOPI-U after she completed work for the local government (after 5pm and on weekends). At the time of the interview, she was involved in developing WOPI-U's strategic plan for 2012-2016. Her first job was with an international development NGO that was working in the West Nile. She began working there just after she graduated from university. She pointed out that she was the first graduate in her county and the eldest of four siblings. She considered herself an activist for women's rights long before she co-founded WOPI-U.

> *But also during the period when I was working with the NGO and even now I developed a liking for the women's group and working with women you know at first they thought I was so radical because I was looking at women, how can we help the women actually go up to the university and get employed? And so people are saying 'aaah, aaah' and I am saying, 'why not?' And so basically, I think it is my interaction with the community that has actually made me become a kind of activist...*(Key Informant S, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

At the time of the interview she was married and had five children. The area she grew up in was heavily affected by the war. Since she had a job and was expected to provide support to others who sought refuge from the fighting forces.

> *We have an established home… but my family were living in small-small huts with no source of income, they were now dependent on us. And for us we could afford because my sister was also working so we could afford to spend a lot of money to support the family and so it's not only our money there were others that we used to support, there were also our grandparents…* (Key Informant S, founder, WOPI- U, December 2013).

She and her friend decided to garner support from their colleagues and friends to assist women who lived in IDP camps. They collected secondhand clothing to give to women in IDP camps and then later brought together a group of women they knew and encouraged them to form an organisation that would enable them to draw on each other's social networks. They formed an interim board, drew up a constitution, and began to collect membership fees. They attracted the attention of funders such as the British High Commission, where one of the members had contacts. Their objective was to

> *…touch the hearts of the women who were living in the camps…* [who they saw were left to fend for themselves, to take on the role of] *breadwinners… the ones who were supposed to look after the families, the men could not do anything. They were either gone, on the run or in hiding and could not do anything* (Key Informant S, founder WOPI-U, December 2013).

The third founder member I interviewed is Key Informant W (KIW). At the time of the interview, she was an accountant in a German international organisation. She was 43 years old and the only one of all founders across the six organisations who identified as Muslim. She grew up a Christian, like most people in Northern Uganda, but changed religion when she got married. She grew up in a large family of close to 100 people because her father had many wives. She was the second eldest of her siblings who were born from her mother. She explained that between 2002 and 2003, when she lived in Lira town with her husband and children, she recalled large numbers of people arriving in Lira and sleeping outside buildings. They had fled from villages where violence was rife. This was before IDP camps were formed. Her mother, who was still living in their rural home, also fled from the fighting. On her way to Lira town, her mother came across a woman with eight children and saw that she was struggling to cope

with all of them so she offered to help by taking on two of these children from her. She looked after them as if they were her own.

During the war women were seen on the roads carrying food and bedding, accompanied by their children. These heavy loads slowed them down and they arrived hungry and exhausted in the towns.

> *What motivated us was the war, the LRA war that brought women and children into the camps and then women continued to take up their responsibilities with very little support, affected by the war, they were traumatized. And so we were looking at making, reaching out to that woman, talking to her, encouraging her, supporting her maybe morally or even in a way that she can develop and begin to do something to earn a living* (Key Informant W, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

5.3.2. Kitgum Concerned Women's Association (KICWA)

KICWA was founded in August 1998 by ten people who lived in Kitgum town. Its purpose was to provide rehabilitation for children who were brought back from fighting by the Ugandan Army. KICWA was one of two (the other being the Concerned Parents Association) rehabilitation referral 'sites' for the Kitgum Amnesty International office and was supported by the International Rescue Committee and the World Food Programme. These organisations assisted with provision of food, tracing of children's families and the children's reintegration. According to a staff member, Key Informant Z (KIZ), since its founding, it has hosted approximately 4,000 children who were later reunited with their respective families and communities. At any one time KICWA hosted between 50 to 250 children who would spend between three to four weeks at KICWA before they were reunited with their families. KICWA was founded during the same period that two large international development organisations set up office in Kitgum – International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI).

> *I first got, my first job actually I got was IRC in 2001, November 2001. And by IRC's mandate by then was working with formerly abducted children and all those beneficiaries affected by the war, children affected by the war. And it so happened that when KICWA was formed around 1998 it happened that IRC was also coming to Kitgum, it was one of the first international NGOs to come into Kitgum, alongside AVSI. So, I think immediately they identified themselves with the women who formed KICWA* (Key Informant Z, staff, KICWA, February 2015).

During the time that KICWA was supported by IRC and AVSI, it was one of the main organisations that took in children who had been received by Amnesty International's office in Kitgum. This meant that from its early years of work it was already heavily influenced by the government's amnesty processes and international development organisations' approaches to addressing mass violence and displacement in post-conflict contexts. This Key Informant worked for IRC before he was employed at KICWA. His work within IRC's psychosocial department led to his interest in working to assist KICWA rehabilitate children. At the time of my interview with him, he held the position of senior psychosocial assistant at KICWA. In addition, IRC bought the land for KICWA's offices and worked with and funded many of its reintegration programmes for several years.

> *And so when I got this employment in IRC it was by then the psychosocial department …that worked directly with KICWA. And by then KICWA's capacity was very low. The women who started this organisation were women of very humble background and many of them could barely read and write and there were no professional staff on board and so it was mainly IRC's work in terms of staffing as well as the financial almost to make this centre functional, so the logistical support. And so part of our work at IRC …. was ensuring that everything is functioning well, that the children eat, receive medical attention, psychosocial activities are on-going, new cases are attended to and all that* (Key Informant Z, staff, KICWA, February 2015).

The one founder interviewed, Key Informant Y (KIY), was 59 years old at the time of this study. She is a widow, retired secretary of a senior secondary school and has six children. She had been an active member of her local community and was involved in founding various small income generation projects prior to and after co-founding KICWA. During the war, she and nine other women used their personal resources to feed and take care of children who had returned from captivity but had not been claimed by communities. She reflected on the compassion she felt at these children's plight and how it spurred her to co-found KICWA:

> *Yes, so it was actually late 1997. When there was a rally launched by the resident district commissioner where the UPDF had rescued about 125 children from the bush so that rally was actually to inform people, and let people see if they have any knowledge of these children… if it is their relatives or if they know the whereabouts of their families…where the children comes from and then they can help the children and take the children to their respective homes. By that time there was no reception centre*

in Kitgum, it was all in Gulu. And at that time, it was very risky to move from Kitgum to Gulu, there were ambushes and there were many terrible things that could happen, even abductions could happen. And so, I happen to go to that rally, I went with some of our friends and we saw, some children were picked, they had other children from Apachi, from Lira, from Gulu and I think there was even one from Moyo and these children they were taken back to the barracks. And when they were taken back, I mean the army were taking them back they were so miserable, they were crying. So we felt, say now my sister's son is abducted, my brothers' son is also abducted now supposing these children were also among these children where they would have no relatives they would also have this experience and so we felt the pain (Key Informant Y, founder, February, 2015).

They sought permission from the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) to assist the children in this way. They would feed them in their own homes and in some cases take those who needed medical assistance to the nearest hospital at their own expense. This was a strain on their already limited financial means. It also required a series of difficult conversations with the government army and senior local government officials. The women were initially thought to be interfering with military processes, even though it was clear that the army had no facilities to host, feed and take care of children within the army barracks. The army officials may have been resistant to the women taking the children because they had plans for some of the children to be integrated into the government army. Eventually after trust had been built between the women, local government officials and army officials, the women were provided a makeshift shelter to meet with the children regularly.

We could go to the barracks, or they bring them to us, because after that period they identified a place…a structure like this one [points to her house] but without windows like this one. So, we started receiving them in that house so we could come and register and say where do you come from, your father, your mother, your uncle, somebody you know. At times we … could go to all those areas, we trace the families, they come, they see their children, [and] they go back... the International Rescue could come in they started supporting us, they started paying some of the hospital bills and we started sending them to St Joseph's hospital because with the government hospitals sometimes the services are not really perfect sometimes they could not even help those children (Key Informant Y, founder, February, 2015).

Like other founder members her family was also directly affected by the war. She explained how her mother fell ill and died because of the war situation. Her mother could not be taken to the hospital in time since the roads were blocked by militia groups. Several of her family members were either abducted, went missing or died. She also found herself looking after many family members who fled to Kitgum town.

> *I didn't get to see her [her mother] and she was never taken for treatment until she died …because the LRA would not allow the movement of vehicles unless under heavy escorts. Before that one I think my aunty had a son who she sent to come to me and he was abducted and even up to now I think I can confirm that he is dead …at my sister's house… these boys …who were inside all came out and all of them were abducted. One initially was killed there and then and some of them they went to the bush and none of them has returned, and we also don't know whether they are alive or dead* (Key Informant Y, Founder, KICWA, February 2015).

Despite her own family needing assistance with food, shelter and medical attention, she also took care of the children at the barracks. Twelve people lived with her at the time she founded KICWA. She realised that she had a role to play in caring for these children, helping them to get to hospital, and later trying to link them up with their families.

> *I think I started seeing that I had at least a big role that I've played to begin receiving those children when they also did some abductions at my own home, then my mother died, my brother, then my sister but I still had the courage to receive them, talk to them and actually be there for them in the hospital because they don't know where their parents are. Some died, what helped us was their friends who will say this one comes from this place, this is the name, this is the parish where the child comes from* (Key Informant Y, Founder, KICWA, February 2015).

> *They [women who founded KICWA] remain part of the team because they performed that motherly figure to the children. So what happened is that they we gave them responsibilities from among them the majority of them were caregivers, all of them were caregivers actually. From among them, two nurses, there was a storekeeper, and the rest were caregivers and so it was a general kind of duty for them. They would take turns, they would work here during the day and then they would take turns spending the night here with the children to ensure that everything was going alright. It was*

important for them because we thought that when the children come back they would have some kind of motherly figure and something close to their home setting and not just a pure institution...(Key Informant Z, staff, KICWA, February 2015).

From 2004 to 2005, due to the reduction and return of children from captivity, KICWA did not receive any formerly abducted children and began to work with a larger community of 'vulnerable children'. This entailed setting up village saving schemes and income generation projects (mainly involving livestock and seeds) as well as material support (in the form of books) for children who were in school. These initiatives were set up for all members of the community and did not only target children who were once abducted. By providing assistance to the entire community KICWA hoped that these formerly abducted children would be more readily accepted and not stigmatised by the community. KICWA also facilitated 'sensitization workshops' for the community around highly problematic issues such as land disputes, gender-based violence, healing and acceptance of formerly abducted children, among others. Concerning the formerly abducted children, the prevailing belief was that the only way for them to heal (and stop experiencing nightmares) was to perform certain rituals. KICWA supported these rituals by encouraging family members to conduct them when a child was re-united.

5.3.3 Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative (KIWEPI)

KIWEPI was founded in 1999 by a group of women who shared some of their personal resources (such as food and clothes) so that they could assist women and children who were displaced and were living in Kitgum (either in their homes or in IDP camps). It was later legally registered in 2004 and operated in two districts – Kitgum and Lamwo. Once registered, their activities became more formalised in order to create alternative ways of making money and feeding the families of those women who were formerly abducted and who sought refuge in Kitgum town. At the time of the study, staff members estimated that up to 2,100 women were involved in Village Loan and Savings Associations as part of projects funded by CARE International. This also involved group counselling sessions that were integrated into the way income generating activities were organised. KIWEPI later got involved in assisting with the integration of formerly abducted women, girls and their children with their families. This entailed efforts to reduce stigma of the formerly abducted through sensitisation workshops organised by peace clubs or drama groups. KIWEPI formed six groups – one in each parish.

KIWEPI had a strong history of partnering with several international development organisations and being able to obtain funding. At the time of this study, their activities were extensively influenced by the nature of the partnerships and the extent of funding received from international development organisations such as CARE International, Association of Volunteers in International Service Foundation (AVSI), USAID, UN Women, among others. One prominent project that KIWEPI was connected to was SCORE - Sustainable Responses to Improving the Lives of Vulnerable Children. It was funded by CARE International and worked to support at-risk children. It did this by increasing the stability of households through increasing food security, financial resources, legal services and access to health. The project also integrated village saving associations, farmer support, and legal redress options.

Another project they were involved in is *Roco Kwo* – which means transforming life in Luo. This was part of a larger programme ran by the Northern Uganda Women Empowerment Program – NUWEP[14]. The programme had the following three main objectives:

- People recovering from conflict, especially women, to have improved and sustainable economic livelihoods;
- Enhanced peaceful co-existence and participation of women in decision making processes at all levels;
- Women in Acholi-sub-region are able to access justice and advocate for the protection of their rights and that of the very poor."

People who benefited from the project had to be part of a Village Saving and Loan Association – an approach to micro- financing that was spearheaded and funded by CARE International, AVSI and USAID. As part of NUWEP, KIWEPI trained 200 formerly abducted girls in sustainable life skills and supported women who were experiencing 'gender-based violence' to gain access to the legal justice system.

At the time of the study, United Nations Women (UN Women) were funding KIWEPI to implement a project called 'Women's Access to Justice'. The programme offered survivors of violence, counselling and assistance with reporting the matter to the police. In some cases they would offer food, accommodation and financial support while the cases were being taken to

[14] A full outline of this programme can be found in an evaluation report authored by CARE Austria (2015). CARE Austria funded the programme.

court. Given delayed responses from hospitals, police and delayed court hearings, KIWEPI assisted with following up on cases on behalf of the survivor of violence.

> *For example, it happened with ...a case of a girl from Nam okora who was detained by some boy for two days. The perpetrator was arrested, brought up to CPS, Kitgum. So when this lady and her father came, for them they thought they would take this man to prison for hearings first. But when they reached… they were told the suspect has been released. So they had to come here and find out. They told us the story because they had already reported …also the medical information and other things had happened from Namukora. We only facilitated the transport, accommodation and lunch. So when we went to police, they told us the suspect was there for two days, but they had to release him on bond, but already they had to close this file because the perpetrator is a minor, a juvenile. He is sixteen and we do not have a juvenile cell in Kitgum, they had to release him. Besides, even the girl is sixteen so they are almost of the same age, we cannot now detain them. So we had to come back. Follow up also is our duty* (Key Informant X, staff, KIWEPI, January 2015).

Alongside CARE International, KIWEPI petitioned the speaker of parliament to pass the Domestic Relations Bill, that is still yet to be passed.[15] KIWEPI was also involved in addressing the reproductive health needs of women and trained 240 village health teams. The peace group had also been part of monitoring the impact of government-led post-conflict reconstruction programmes such as the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) and the Northern Uganda Social Capital Fund (NUSAF).

KIWEPI was also involved in community peacebuilding efforts that included ensuring women's concerns were communicated during the Juba Peace talks. They assisted with community efforts to convince rebels to return from fighting and release those who were abducted. In 2010, KIWEPI began to work with men by integrating them into saving and income generation schemes and encouraging men to take on family responsibilities and reduce involvement in violence against women and abuse of alcohol. At the time of the study, KIWEPI's most recent work involved assisting women with land disputes.

A co-founder and director of KIWEPI was active at many levels in her community. She was a teacher while engaged in civil service. She chaired the district women's council from 1998 to

[15] As late as 2013, the bill was withdrawn by government from parliament to allow MPs more time to consult with their constituencies.

2006, and was a member of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative. Her husband was the assistant resident district commissioner when he was killed in an ambush while on duty in 1996. Since then she took an active stance to condemn the war. She approached the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) so that she and other women could sensitise the community on the importance of building peace and lobbied the community to accept amnesty so that children who were abducted were encouraged to return without fear of persecution. The RDC gave them a space in the office to use and she took on the role of the patron of the newly formed group. They requested the office of the RDC to assist them with funds:

> *We had to request the office of the RDC to get us some donors, some well-wishers who could build our capacity as women who would like to engage in advocacy work. Because before you go for advocacy work, you need to know the areas, how to identity the areas you have to work on* (Key Informant C, founder, KIWEPI, December 2013).

Her daughter (Key Informant B) who also worked at KIWEPI grew up with members of KIWEPI around her, as well as the women and children they supported. She would teach the women how to read, write and basic computer literacy. She remembered listening to stories of women who returned from captivity. Some of them even said they preferred living in the bush because (especially those who were married to generals) they wielded a lot of power and could give orders and get things done easily. Those who had children with senior men in LRA were given maids to help them with their children and household chores. KIB recalled how some of the women who returned from captivity found it difficult to adapt to their new situation by being rebellious and unruly.

Another founder member got involved in founding KIWEPI when she met a woman at the resident district commissioner's office. At that time, there were many formerly abducted children (they were especially concerned for the girls who had babies who were born in captivity and were now seeking shelter in town) and they discussed ways they could be of practical help.

> *I can offer a saucepan. If somebody can offer a cup of beans, somebody else can offer some piece of firewood. Why don't we come together as they come and they have, nothing to eat, they have nowhere to go, they have nobody to talk with them. We get somewhere where we can talk with them. We get to know their problem, we get to know their backgrounds, their family members. If can connect them to their family members.*

> *So, we started like that. And one lady, who has already passed away… offered her home* (Key Informant L, founder, KIWEPI, December 2013).

They then started meeting; initially doing so in each other's homes and later becamemore formalised with support from the RDC and other interested organisations. This founder member also reflected on how the war affected her personal life. She recalled having to hide in a bush when she was about 12 years old because there was a rumour that the rebels were going to abduct her and her friends who had made their way to a school in a nearby town so that they could write their grade 7 exams. She narrated how they all had to hide under cassava bushes and wait for food to be delivered to them by their families. In the morning, they would feel the cold dew from the cassava leaves on their skins and shudder from the cold. When the sun came out they would all lie together in the sun "like lizards" so they could warm up. They were not captured by the rebels then, but she shared how hard it was to live in the bush as children. Later on, as a sixteen-year-old, LRA rebels abducted her, her six-month-old baby and her mother. They were lucky because after two days of walking, the rebels did not want to continue their journey with their abductees, so they were released. These challenges spurred her on to complete her formal education and at the time of the interview she had a degree in business administration and worked as a senior secretary for a government office in Gulu.

The only founder member who was not in formal employment at the time of the study was a refugee who migrated from Sudan and became an active member of ARLPI. Red Cross helped her cross the border to Uganda. Later she was trained as a peace animator in ARLPI and she trained people about the process of forgiveness. She was later promoted to the district peace team of ARLPI. Due to this role, she was able to sleep in the town mosque, rather than the refugee camp. She had ten dependents – her children and grandchildren. Despite her own challenges of settling in Uganda she was at the forefront of wanting to help other women in vulnerable situations:

> *So, we said we will form a group...We took the plates in our home, we took the cups in our home, we took our money and opened a centre over there to start the centre. Then we walked to the offices, we come to the World Food, we go to the ACCORD, those NGO's that were here… Like World Food, they have given us… also to assist us because we want to get them to be in the centre. So we thought if we bring those women here we start counselling first, we talk to them and we tell them… they were forced to do that...you must forgive…*(Key Informant A, founder, KIWEPI, December 2013).

5.3.4. Women's Advocacy Network (WAN)

WAN is a group war-affected women who came together to advocate for justice, and accountability for gender-based violations inflicted upon them during war in Northern Uganda. It was formed in May 2011 with the support of Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) with the aim of empowering women survivors to participate in post-conflict policy debates and to engage grassroots communities in gendered discussions on reintegration and reconciliation. Twelve war-affected women, who were engaged in a storytelling project at JRP, proposed the establishment of an advocacy group to serve as a platform through which they and other women who were abducted during the war, could communicate their concerns. They would communicate these concerns to people and organisations that were responsible for post-war reconstruction efforts, particularly those involved in transitional justice processes in Northern Uganda. In a focus group discussion with eight members of WAN, one of the founders reflected on why they started WAN:

> *I do remember that before WAN began, life was very difficult because people did not like us in the community. First of all, if you came back from the bush people thought that you are the one who committed the crimes that LRA did. People in the community blamed us for all the crimes that the LRA committed. There was very little love for us. People did not like us, what made us decided that it was important for us to be in our own group, was when we were in St Monica. Even when we were queuing up for lunch when we went to eat, we were segregated and labelled dwog cen-Paco [Returnees]. Others called us olum olum (olum means someone who stayed in the bush). We asked ourselves what we should do because we did not want to be called olum. We decided that our voices should be heard so that the problems we go through would stop. We realised that if we were to have a good life we had to be in a group. Starting life was not easy, even at GUSCO Rehabilitation centre. We did not have money or anything. I started life from St.Monica tailoring school. We began the group with seven women* (Founder, WAN, Focus Group, January 2014).

WAN focussed on seven key issues. These were: assisting women and girls with supporting children they bore in captivity; reducing the stigma they faced in the communities upon return; health related needs that resulted from bodily harm they experienced during captivity; psychosocial support to heal from traumatic memories from the war; acknowledgement and

apologies from LRA commanders who abducted, sexually violated and forcibly married them; and reconciliation with their families and the broader community (Apiyo, 2013: 37 – 42).

Apart from the difficulty of coming to terms with extreme forms of violence that these women and their children experienced during captivity, they advocated for children's right to know their fathers' clans and get an identity document that would enable them to access government services such as health and education. Establishing their children's paternal clan opened up the possibility of being integrated into an extended family network and this would enable them to draw on communal bonds of support. They could lay claims on land, material support, and a spiritual connection that opened up the possibility of healing through local cleansing ceremonies.

The only key informant from WAN who had not experienced abduction, was a Project Officer of JRP who worked closely with the other women when she joined a research project that sought to document experiences of women who were abducted by LRA. She joined as a translator for Erin Baines, a co-founder of JRP, who was conducting research on experiences of women who had been abducted by the LRA. In 2013, she wrote a book (unpublished) titled "Adyebo" that was inspired by her work as a translator. The book weaved an analysis of women's narratives of their experiences during captivity and highlighted the formation of WAN and the work they did. Though originally from Northern Uganda, she grew up in Kampala because her mother ran away from the north during the war. At the age of thirteen when her mother died, she moved back to Gulu to live with her aunt. She was in a convent school and somewhat shielded from the war. Her encounters with people who lived in IDP camps prompted her to assist with the establishment of WAN in order to understand what happened during the war and the effect it had on communities. She explains how she felt when she first met women who were part of JRP's research project while she was employed by JRP to be a translator:

> *At first, I thought they were just like other women ... but then I realised that...the first lot were all abducted…I am not like these people...that never mattered...they are here. God...so I was like ok...these were the ones that I was looking for...I really want to be with, I really want to cry with and hold each other and like...you know I can't even feel guilty, I was not abducted, I was like maybe we should have suffered together...*(Key Informant N, founder, WAN, December 2013).

Together with two other founder members they expanded WAN to care for 200 women and twelve community-based women's groups across Northern Uganda. JRP was founded in 2005 as a partnership between the Gulu District NGO Forum (GDNF) and the Liu Institute for Global Issues (LIGI), University of British Columbia (UBC). With its initial funding, JRP worked with local communities in the Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda to document traditional justice practices in order to contribute to national and global debates on accountability and reconciliation. As a result, in 2005 JRP published its flagship report titled, *Roco Wat i Acholi: Restoring Relations in Acholi Land*. The report captured the opinions of cultural leaders, Acholi elders, clan leaders, religious leaders, and opinion leaders in conflict-affected communities. An important finding of the report was that the local mechanisms for resolving conflict could be a strong contributing factor to restoring social harmony and reconciliation among conflict-affected communities in Northern Uganda. As a result of this study, JRP undertook research and advocacy on issues identified through local consultations with cultural leaders, elders, communities in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and other stakeholders.

All the women in the one focus group discussion had been abducted by LRA and were senior wives of commanders. Some had lived in IDP camps after returning from the bush, while others returned from captivity after IDP camps had already been disbanded. They all had gained experience in setting up and convening storytelling groups with other formerly abducted women. Through this they had learnt about 'victim mobilisation' and documentation that were part of JRP's research process. They had also been involved in mentoring other formerly abducted women and community members in storytelling and dialogue as a way of healing.

5.3.5 Live Again

Live Again began after women were brought together from different sub counties in Kitgum and formed a gathering called "Women's Mission for Peace". This was held in 2003. It was a five-day gathering that included religious leaders, government officials, and women from different sub counties. The purpose of the event was to advocate for peace and call for dialogue. When fighting continued, the group then decided to focus on trauma healing and recovery from protracted violence experienced during the war. Their initial activities included training people on basic group therapy skills that could be used in the communities in which they lived. They also dealt with trauma that resulted from violence that occurred in their homes, including 'gender-based violence' particularly that experienced by women in the communities in which they worked. Live Again also emphasizes fostering the restoration of family life, cultural

practices, and caring for the physically disabled. This also included a rotating micro-credit scheme that supports families to become economically self-sufficient. They began with roughly four groups of 30 members each and later grew to eight groups. These groups largely comprised of widows and women whose children were missing. The groups were trained in nutrition and early childhood development.

I interviewed one founder member who held the position of Head teacher at a secondary school in Kitgum and who had a Master's degree in Education and Administration and Planning. She was also an active community member with a senior position in the Mother's Union, a Christian religious community and a member of the Acholi Religious Peace Initiative. In 2003, after attending a 'Healing for Healers' workshop organised by the Acholi Religious Peace Initiative she was motivated to mobilise women in Kitgum to call for peace:

> *So when I came back to Kitgum that was about 2003 …we called 'Women Missions for Peace', where we invited politicians, we invited religious leaders and I was supported by the Mennonite Central Committee Mission and they flew in some government officials from Kampala. It was such a huge thing, we collected women from the entire Kitgum, different sub-counties and when we brought them we did a march around the town and then we made our appeal as women, we advocated for peace, we had a call for dialogue* (Key Informant T, founder, Live Again, February 2015).

She referred to occurrences after this event that sparked further interest in establishing Live Again. Five days after the event there was an ambush by a militia group and seven people were killed. Some community members felt that this was as a result of the women's call for peace. Later, a girl from the school where this founder member taught, went missing and was later found to have been abducted by the LRA and forcibly married to Joseph Kony. She became one of his seven wives. This did not deter the founder member who went on to attend a conference that focused on women contributing to peace in war situations. She highlighted the importance of starting with the family:

> *Why do we focus more on families? We focus more on families being the smallest unit within society ... we know very well that when the peace starts at home then the community gets the peace and then the nation gets the peace. Because instead of just going and picking we are saying let your family first be strong and peaceful and loving*

*and trauma free and even (having) an economically empowered community (*Key Informant T, founder, Live Again, February 2015).

5.3.6. Peoples Voice for Peace

People's Voices for Peace (PVP) was founded in 1995 but did not have an office or staff at the time this study was conducted. Its activities included facilitating community reintegration of formerly abducted children in Northern Uganda, advocacy for peaceful resolution to the LRA conflict, and encouraging local grassroots perspectives in the peaceful resolution of the conflict. They began with a focus on women's voices in the search for peace in Northern Uganda. The peace group began as a result of a participatory research about experiences of women in war, commissioned by Panos and implemented by ACORD. Rosalba Oywa, who worked for ACORD at the time, founded PVP in collaboration with seven women who were part of the research project. As a result of her work with PVP and advocacy for peace in Northern Uganda, Rosalba Oywa was shortlisted for the Nobel Peace prize in 2005.

Rosalba Oywa, was a teacher in a rural school the first time 'the war found her' as she put it. She said she had to be on the move so many times due to the war situation:

> *I had to strap that baby and then another one to carry…. And I was walking on foot, there was no transport and so I had moved fifty miles from that place and going through the bush, the path in the bush to my husband in Pabbo. And actually to be reduced to that level of destitution and I had to start all over again. And the war continued and I had to be displaced so many times. Before I eventually found myself in Gulu town and I built my house so many times. And each time I settled I would have to buy things … and when I move I will leave there and run* (Key Informant K – Rosalba Oywa, founder, PVP, December 2014).

She said that this displacement made it hard for her to continue to work as a teacher in the rural areas of Northern Uganda. She later got an opportunity to work as a rural development officer in an international NGO. She was a field agent who was required to stay in communities to find out what people were going through in order to better inform ACORD as to what they could do to assist. She appreciated this work because it drew on a philosophy of self- reliance. After she lost everything, this helped her address her own situation and start again. Her children lived in town and were taken care of by other family members. She worked for ACORD for 17 years and rose from rural development programme officer to the position of programme

coordinator of the ACORD office. Her own experiences helped her to engage with other less fortunate women in a compassionate manner:

> *Because of that experience of losing everything in the twinkle of an eye and then being reduced from that level of a teacher to being a penny player, becoming destitute completely…had a real impact on me to a level when I saw other people suffering and when I see somebody else being displaced then it brings back that memory to me of that experience and then for me I could see that because I am a working woman, I was able to get other employment, I was able to help myself but for these poor women here they do not have the same level of opportunity* (Key Informant K – Rosalba Oywa, founder, PVP, December 2014).

She said that before the war most Acholi people lived in rural areas and lived off the land and thought the town was just for Nubians and Asians who traded. After and largely due to the many displacements she became a property owner, a community activist and a peace builder. She felt motivated to rise above the negative impact of the war and do something about it. She also became a regional coordinator of Coalition for Peace in Africa – a continental network of peace builders in Africa. While she was at ACORD she was asked to take part in a research project by PANOS – another international NGO that focused on social recovery after war. The research involved getting oral testimonies of women who had lived through war in order reveal their various experiences as fighters, participants, refugees, victims caught between warring factions, organisers for peace and rehabilitation, carers, as well as mothers, relatives and partners of the dead and the disappeared. Together with six other female members of staff at ACORD they wrote a chapter in a book titled *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak Out About Conflict* (Bennet et. al., 1995). Afterwards she contacted the women she interviewed in that research in order to assist them.

> *I asked them if we could make a follow up with the women we interviewed because during the interview they told us their stories and it was most of them had suffered rape and as a result of that they had contracted HIV/AIDS and some of them had complicated gynaecological problems which needed medical attention and it was a real pain for us to go through with those women. So I said why don't we as ACORD go back to those women and we give them something, I feel guilty to think I was able to extort information from those poor women and now we are not giving anything to help them in those conditions they told us and they were being very open to us. But the coordinator*

told me it my initiative…I invited PANOS… it wasn't ACORD so it is not part of ACORD's work and so they are not going to get involved in that type of activity (Key Informant K – Rosalba Oywa , founder, PVP, December 2014).

PANOS agreed both to fund and manage the funding to assist women get medical treatment, especially reproductive health care that they needed as a result of the sexual violence they had experienced at the hands of fighting forces. She and her team also met family members of the women and found that most of their husbands had rejected them (they had been mutilated and raped by rebels). An agreement with a local private hospital was made to obtain the medical care that these women needed.

…we were focusing on the rape survivors but then later when the land mines came we included the land mine survivors and when people were being chopped by the LRA we included them also, the maimed and mutilated. And that is when the men challenged us, you are focusing on women and we have also suffered, we have been tortured and are now disabled why only focus on women? Why include only one group of people? So we expanded to include men (Key Informant K – Rosalba Oywa, founder, PVP, December 2014).

Initially, more than 300 people took part in this early period of their work. Eventually the work extended to addressing basic livelihood needs by means of small income generation projects.

So that was the major support we were now giving them basic trauma counselling and treatment and sending them to hospital for check- ups and then after dealing with them physically and psychologically we then thought of supporting their income generating so that they should not continue begging. Even for those whose limbs were cut off they say give us a loan …, and we will pay you back. We can use for petty trade and that type of thing (Key Informant K – Rosalba Oywa, founder, PVP, December 2014).

In summary, the reasons for this amazing bourgeoning of women's agency through their establishment of various peace groups and organisations presents a multi-layered, nuanced narrative linked to a deep sense of communal responsibility and compassion. African philosophical beliefs about solidarity and connectivity were enacted in the face of shared brutality, fear and victimisation leading to activism. There was a collective responsibility for all children and not just one's own. This showed resilience and initiative in repairing the social fabric of their community and a preparedness to break new ground that defied traditional gendered patterns. The leadership that emerged from these grassroots initiatives and their

contributions to the peace is worth a deeper analysis. The following section discusses the changes that the war created in extended families and the effects this had on women's lives and sense of power and responsibility within and beyond clan structures.

5.4. War, shifts in families and femininities

It is clear that various shifts occurred in women's sphere of influence as they took on more responsibilities as a result of the impact of the war. Mass displacement and violence destabilised several traditional and cultural practices including gender norms amongst the predominantly Acholi and Langi communities. With the destabilisation of masculine power, as discussed in section 5.1, there appeared to be a broadening of (older) women's implicit power as mothers, aunts, and sisters-in-law. Widowhood, forced marriage, and an increase in the number of orphaned children taken into families meant that women experienced an expansion in their responsibilities and an increase in their sphere of influence in the clan. An expansion in their material (as opposed to discursive) power occurred within and beyond their fathers' or husbands' (patri)lineage.

Examples of this were evident across interviews. For instance, one founder member of WOPI-U was a single parent of eight dependants – none of whom were her biological children:

> *Right now, I have eight. My one has now left; she has now matured and she's doing her own things. But my dependents I have four grandchildren I picked from my sisters I am helping them with. Then one son from my brother and then other non-relatives I just picked and just got them on board. I just got them on board. I have currently eight* (Key Informant J, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

She added that her mother met eight children on her way fleeing from the rural area towards the town:

> *She opted to adopt some of these children…. Because I think the mother...How can this woman who has left her home look after all these children? So, mommy was feeling for her and saying, she would adopt some…* (Key Informant W, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Several other founder members referred to a drastic change in the composition of people in their households. As stated earlier (on page 109, a founder member of KIWEPI (Key Informant J, founder) reported to have supported up to 36 persons beyond her 'normal' family.

A founder member of KIWEPI, Key Informant L (KIL, interviewed February 2015) reported that her father died when she was nine. He was killed during Idi Amin's regime while he was a young commander in the army. His body was never found. It was rumoured that he was killed in custody and his body was disposed of in a river. She referred to experiences of being displaced several times as a child. At 16, she, her newborn daughter and mother were abducted for about six months. Over the years, she and her mother lived with several members of the extended family who themselves had been displaced and sought refuge in Kitgum town.

Another participant referred to the precarious circumstances in which families were reconfigured as they were forced to move to places that were considered 'safe' such as near army barracks in Gulu town:

> *We actually had very many of our relatives moving to town, they put up a shelter right outside town, not so far. Just behind the barracks. It could have been the safest place and that place was housing over close to fifty people who were staying within that compound. Better than staying in the camps…You'd find a family of seven even within one hut and you know there are thousands of huts within one location…*(Informant M, staff, FIDA- Gulu, February 2015).

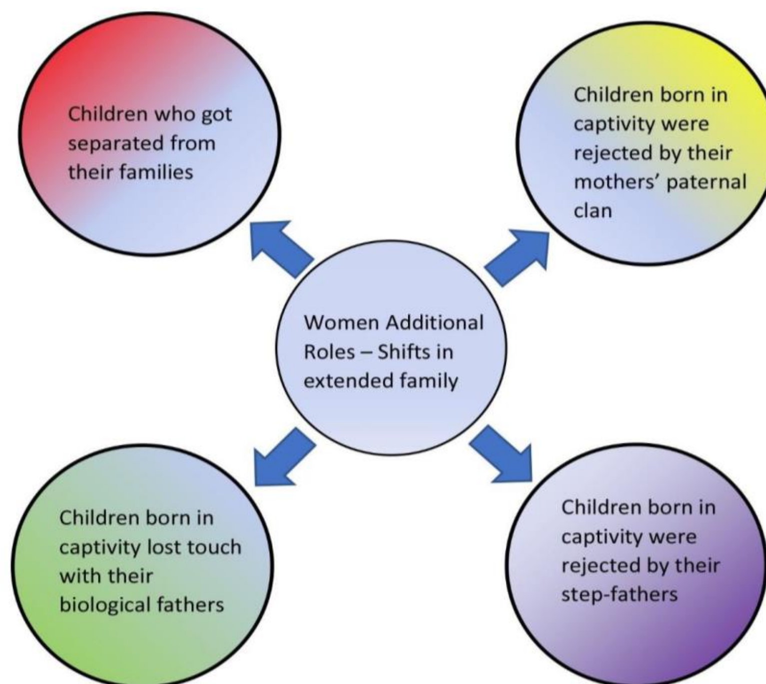
By looking after orphaned children, grandchildren, children of other members of the extended family (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles), their maternal role expanded at a time when there were minimal socio-economic options available. In addition to this, the everyday chaos of overcrowded IDP camps meant there was an inevitable mixing of clans and sub-clans within a confined space and a general loss of social control. Women who were displaced somehow managed to support families from handouts from international humanitarian organisations, small group saving schemes, petty trade, and food from abandoned fields or small gardens in and around towns where people settled. In an attempt to respond to this humanitarian crisis, many women relied on each other:

> *I think if you look at this conflict it seems as if everything happened in such a way that…. let me talk before this conflict I think this was a very patrilineal society, in the sense that the men did everything. The women's role was to cook, work in the garden*

and stay home. But if you look at this conflict it has kind of brought out something in women and so right from this there was a rise in organisations, CBOs in Kitgum you will find that almost 90percent of them are women-founded (Key Informant X, staff, KICWA, February 2015).

Thus, shifts and alterations in patrilineal ties occurred as a consequence of the war and it impacted on women and children especially. Figure 4 below illustrates these shifts.

Figure 4: Women and shifts in families



There was a definite increase in the number of people women took care of - many of whom were not directly connected to their fathers' or husbands' lineage. This study revealed four ways in which women took on parental responsibility for multiple extended family members:

- Children who got separated from their families ended up being supported by women who were not part of the children's paternal clan;
- Children born in captivity who were rejected by their mothers' paternal clan were taken on by other families;
- Children born in captivity who were rejected by their step-fathers were looked after by their mothers' paternal clan;

- Children born in captivity who lost touch with their biological fathers joined their mothers' paternal clan.

It was mostly women who took on the expanded role of dealing with the death of family members at the hands of rebels; loss of family members who were abducted; the loss of property (especially land, cattle and houses); and the pain of experiencing or witnessing extreme forms of violence including rape or maiming. A founder member of People's Voice for Peace (Key Informant K, interviewed on 24 December 2014) explained that it was mainly women who responded to this crisis to the extent that one of the most well-known centres that was established to rehabilitate children who were abducted during the war was founded by a woman:

> *When the children started coming back those who were abducted initially the army would take them, when they came back the soldiers would bring them to the barracks, any child who came back they would keep them there. It was the women, one lady who was a local government district counsellor and she just went there and said, 'What are you doing with our children, what do you know about children? You did not protect them when they were being abducted. Why are you keeping them here? We want these children to be given to us we shall know what to do with them.' And so without anything she organized Gulu Support The Children organisation, GUSCO. She organized GUSCO… other people came later to give her support … the politicians tried to hijack the whole thing as it if it was their own thing* (Key Informant K, founder, PVP, December 2014) .

One particularly vulnerable constituency of women were those who were abducted and returned with children born during captivity. According to Annan et al., (2011: 883) up to 26 per cent of female youth (aged 14-35) were abducted during the war. They were mainly recruited to become "wives" of men in militia groups and mothers of abducted children, some of whom were not their own. Those who were forcibly married (up to 25 percent) experienced coercive sexual relationships "…characterised by shared domicile, domestic responsibilities, exclusivity, and sex carried out under threat" (Annan et al., 2011: 884). The longer the time in captivity the higher the chances of forced marriage and children. Of the six peace groups included in this study, WAN was the only one solely founded by women who were formerly abducted. Eight informants shared the following information about the year they were abducted and the number of children they bore during captivity:

Table 10: Formerly abducted women: years in captivity and the children they bore

Informant	Year abducted	Number of years in captivity	Children born in captivity	Number of children in household
1	1994	11	3 (returned with 2)	6
2	1992	9	3 (one died)	4
3	1992	12	1	Miscarried twice
4	1995	11	2	No data
5	1996	8	2	4 (one died)
6	1992	12	3 (one died)	3
7	1995	9	3	5
8	1993	7	2 (one died)	4 (one is her sisters)

Source: Focus Group Discussion, Gulu, December 2013

Their experiences of reintegration when they returned from the "bush" was characterised by high levels of stigmatisation from their own families and the larger community. Apart from physical, emotional, and sexual violence experience during their time of captivity, they also experienced verbal and physical abuse from extended family members, and intimate partner violence upon return (Annan & Brier, 2010). Striking was the violence they described after escaping from the rebels, when they were back with their families. Focus group participants said:

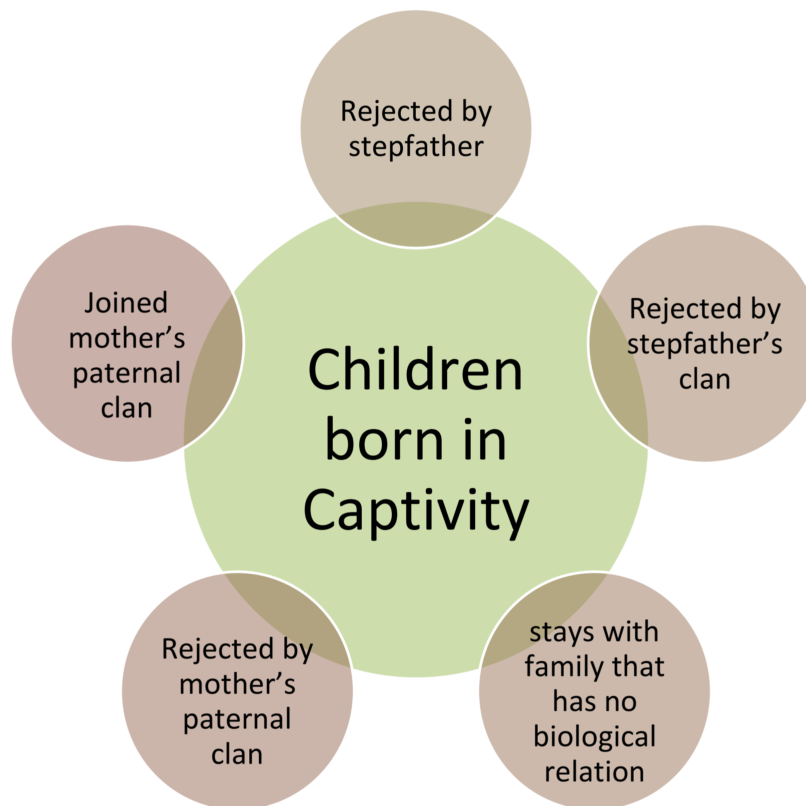
> *The children we came back with were not allowed to play with other kids. If the kids fought when playing they said the cen*[16] *from their fathers disturbed them and that is why they beat other kids. When I was abducted I was given to a sick man. When I came back I was not fine. I kept on suffering from sickness until I began to take*

[16] Ghostly vengeance

medicine. That was when I felt better. I was so sad. When the child was insulted and on the other hand I looked at the problem I was going through. I was sick and could not do anything. It was painful (Focus Group Discussant, WAN, December 2013).

Thus, some of the most vulnerable victims of this war were children born in captivity since they had to deal with wide scale rejection and had minimal clan support. Figure 5 below illustrates the plight of these children.

Figure 5: Children born in captivity – Clan Disruption



Mothers of children born in captivity had lost contact with the father of their child(ren) and were not able to sometimes find them or be accepted by the child's paternal clan. This situation was further bedevilled by the fact that militia groups tended not to use their clan name in order to conceal their true identities so that they could not be easily traced by community members or government forces. This made it even harder for mothers to trace their children's paternal clan after they returned from the "bush". Some women who were forced to marry the rebels did not accept the legitimacy of those marriages. They indicated that traditional processes of payment of the bride price and other ceremonies that introduced non-lineage members into the family, were not followed. This finding is similar to that of Apio's (2016: 182) research on the politics of kinship and marriage amongst children born in war in Northern Uganda. She found

that the LRA rebels also resisted integrating their 'war-wives' into their lineages upon return because they did not want any harm happening to a non-lineage member living in their home. This could attract *kwor*, or ' blood feud', from the dead person's patriclan unless she was married following Lango rules. Consequently, as the women were reintegrated in their natal villages, they dropped their LRA status as (forced) wives of LRA officers and militants and re-appropriated their pre-war identity as daughters and sisters in their post-war families and lineages (Apio, 2016: 182). Thus, a significant amount of clan disruption occurred as a direct result of the war and this no doubt further destabilised family networks.

There were many 'fatherless' children who were unable to claim ancestral allegiance from their paternal clan. With no knowledge of or contact with their biological father's lineage, these children often ended up living with their mother's paternal clan. A staff member of a women's legal centre in Gulu (FIDA) stated that they received many cases in which women could not get identity documents for the children they bore in captivity because they did not know the name of the father of the child(ren).[17] This meant that they could not easily benefit from government facilities like amnesty for returnees, health facilities and schools that required the use of identity documents to access services.

> *You realise that there are categories of people that have been identified for compensation and here, women and girls were not considered as ex-combatants, and that is where they are left vulnerable and yet these women and girls, some of them have come with three or four children. And now these children are without the clan, why do I say without the clan, because in our culture, if you are not properly married… then the child will not have a clan ... and most of those children do not have the fathers, some of them were killed in the war, some of them have not come back up to now and the children have been left with these women, so it is the women who are still carrying the brunt of problem now, educating, feeding, upbringing these children* (Key Informant C, founder and director, KIWEPI, December 2013).
>
> *…women's rights were violated when we were abducted, even when the government was there. We were forced into sexual slavery. We were taken as children and also gave birth to children. If we keep quiet nobody will know what we are going through. The government has forgotten about us. If the men who abducted us speak, they are listened*

[17] Government procedure for getting an identity document requires that details of father of the child is included on the application forms.

to… then what about us women (Focus Group Discussant 7, member, WAN, focus group discussion, December 2013).

A former co-director of Isis-WICCE who had worked with many women's peace groups in Northern Uganda pointed out difficulties faced by children who could not locate their fathers' clan:

> *Those children have been a huge problem to Northern Uganda because you have to know the father of the child in order to know the clan, you cannot bring up a clan-less child and that has been a huge problem and so some organisations have been dealing with that as well as trying to get some of these returnees …from IDP camps or from captivity… and some organisations are basically trying to help them settle down and get a skill* (Informant V, former staff, Isis-WICCE, February 2015).

A staff member (Programme coordinator) of WOPI-U indicated that there was no provision for children whose fathers whereabouts were unknown and/ or whose clan name could not be identified (Interview, December 2013). Many women tried to survive without support from their children's paternal clan by taking them into their own maternal clan. However, these children were still ostracised by others:

> *When I returned home my mother loved me… those around me didn't. When I went back home one day from the garden and found my children had been stoned saying they were rebels' children. That was the reason why I left home and came to town. When I came to town I got a man. I was not ready. I did not want to. I gave birth to two children. Everyone ostracised me even my relatives* (Focus Group Discussant 7, member, WAN, December 2013).

> *My uncle refused that I should not be left at his home. That he did not want rebels' children... He continued to refuse and said I should be taken to my uncle's wife's place. My uncle's wife said they wanted me to cut off her neck …My uncle then wanted me to become his wife…. I made up my mind to leave home. My relatives still call my children Kony. They say these children cut off people's necks* (Focus Group Discussant 6, member, WAN, December 2013).

Women who had children during their time in captivity were blamed for any misfortune that happened in the family – anything from accidents, inability to conceive, miscarriages, to death.

The communities believed that they brought misfortune because they brought '*cen*' – vengeance of the dead. They also experienced rejection from the family of the men they married upon return from the "bush". One member of WAN spoke about how relatives of her new husband asked for Joseph Kony (leader of LRA) to pay for lobola for her so that she could marry their son. In extreme cases of rejection, women who experienced this form of ostracization would either leave or be chased away by their own family or their in-laws. Some women even abandoned their children (born in captivity) or left them with other family members rather than bring them into a new clan that would not welcome them. During my conversations with staff of WOPI-U a particularly gruesome incident was recounted during one of their storytelling group sessions:

> A woman was abducted by the LRA as a child. She and others were forced to eat parts of her uncle while he was still alive. As her uncle cried for help he uttered her name and begged her to stop. The LRA soldiers then forced her to continue. When she returned to the community, the story had spread and she was shunned. Her own mother and extended family refused to accept her. She then was forced to settle in another district – in LIRA. She is from an area near Gulu…she married another man and had a child. When she heard of her mother's death, she decided to go to the funeral to pay her respects. Her family did not allow her to attend the funeral. She wept in the group as she told this story…they all wept (Field Notes, 6th September, 2013).

As reported by Apio (2016: 180):

> …the graveness of stigma and discrimination on former forced wives in particular is due to the tension associated with control over their sexuality and reproduction. They had left as young girls – many of them prepubescent – and returned as women with children, no longer recognisable to parents (see also Women's Commission 2001, 2002). These changes from girl to woman and mother had taken place in the LRA, away from the girls' families, lineages and communities. The families and lineages, and other members in the community, had not been part of these changes that they were now confronting. The main shapers of the changes had been Kony and his LRA commanders.

The patriclan of those who were abducted as girls were extremely suspicious of them when they returned from the bush as mothers of children who were fathered by these rebels. This development threatened the male authority in the clan. They had to adhere fully to kinship rules and gender norms in order to be somewhat accepted. Where reintegration was not possible into

their patriclan, the other alternative was to marry into another lineage and follow marital customs that enabled them to be legitimately integrated. The centrality of marriage was still upheld despite the violence they experienced at the hands of husbands and in-laws. It would seem that most women upon return from captivity chose the heterosexual marriage option probably for purposes of their livelihood and security.

Another factor adding to the continued vulnerability of women and children returning from captivity is the difficulty of accessing land. As discussed earlier in this chapter, due to patriarchal patrilineal land inheritance practices, most women are unable to own land. So women who returned from captivity could only access land via their husbands' clan or their fathers' clan. With strained or broken relationships in both clans, they were often unable to own land upon return. The destabilisation of masculine dominance appeared to have opened up spaces for women to challenge patriarchal social systems, especially when it came to land inheritance and the reconfiguration of family structures. However, this did not necessarily mean that patriarchal norms had shifted since it is clear that when it came to marriage and land, men's power was still intact. Bourdieu (1996) argues that family exists within a domain of socially ingrained habits, skills and dispositions (referred to as 'habitus') that functions as a classificatory scheme that shapes how individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it. Drawing on this understanding of family and social structure, it could be that war and its concomitant 'post war moments' offer spaces of cognitive struggle over the meaning of social influences outside normal Acholi patrilineal family structures. The war may have provided a context in which versions of Acholi and Langi socially ingrained habits, skills and dispositions within patrilineal ties were partially disrupted. This could have resulted in some shifts away from certain material and social forms of masculine dominance.

The women's narratives indicate some evidence of shifts in women's spaces of power. This is especially in relation to their previous reliance on social, economic and cultural masculine capital in rural communities which were directly impacted by the war. The impact of the war and the arrival of 'returnees' to towns opened up possibilities for other kinds of social, economic and cultural capital amongst some women who were capable of responding to the crisis. Such social capital may have always existed on the margins of patrilineal clan systems, lying dormant and needing the coming together of several factors within a given social situation. The founding of peace groups seems to be a consequence of an expansion of agency, especially amongst women who lived in towns where people fled to. A founder of People's

Voice for Peace (interviewed on 24 December 2014), highlighted that several of the key community organisations that were formed to address the crisis of abducted children and fragmented families were formed by women:

> *And when the girls continued being abducted from schools and when the rebels initially abducted the Aboke girls that became the public thing. Who was making that noise? It was the women. And Concerned Parents was formed by women…it is simply because we just don't talk, we want to act, we want to do something and so they find themselves initially using their own resources, their time, their resources, everything to do something... It is just that heart of giving hope to another person and that heart of stopping what is happening and for us we see everybody as our relatives….*

Feminist research on the politics of consciousness has given a more complex understanding of women's relationship with hegemonic patriarchal structures than that offered by Bourdieu's typology of 'doxa', 'habitus' and 'political consciousness.' There is less investment in structuralism as a way of understanding possibilities for change. Questions of agency, fluidity and the instability of subject positions and identities offer a critique to Bourdieu's rather static appraisal. Lovell (2000) for example, compares and contrasts Bourdieu's approach with that of Judith Butler's more fluid interpretations of gender performance. Lovell (2000: 18) points out that "A feminist politics needs identity possibilities of intervention to effect social transformation, but an effective politics is one which recognises the tightness of the constraints which bind women into social circumstances in which they find themselves". For example, research in the Asian and Middle-eastern contexts suggests that women recognise (even covertly resist) male domination ideology, but also comply in strategic ways that ensure their own and their children's security (Rankin, 2002: 8). One could argue that the narratives of women reveal aspects of subversive intent (by claiming spaces of power traditionally belonging men) but at the same time taking part in reproducing patriarchal practices (such relying on marriage as a route to (re)gaining respectibilty) for their own strategic ends. Thus, one would have to interrogate the kinds of agency they engaged in at various times and contexts in order to fully understand the nature of that agency and the purposes it served.

The founding of peace groups reveals their capacity to "…process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion" (Giddens in Long, 1992: 23). It appears that they were 'knowledgeable' and 'capable' social actors who crafted individual and collective options for themselves and the communities around them. All

were motivated by the need to respond to their personal experiences of violence and deprivation as well as those of the extended families and a broader community who sought refuge near their homes.

Cockburn's (2007) book on feminism and women peace activists emphasises issues of agency and diversity as being inextricably intertwined with local constructions of femininities and masculinities. The coping mechanisms used by founders of peace groups in this study reveal a kind of resilient femininity that lends itself to an ability to adapt to a threatening and precarious environment through the formation of (in)formal support networks. All refer to drawing on informal networks of friends and colleagues to provide necessities such as food and clothing. WOPI-U, KICWA, and KIWEPI relied on friends to collect clothes, soap and food, for example. Some of them had their own resources because of the socio-economic leverage they had by virtue of having a home and a source of income at the time. With the urgency of the mass displacement and violence, they were pressured to quickly draw on their friends who also had some income and were in a position to share resources. Their position in society, for instance being the first graduate in Lira or the first woman to hold the position of Officer General in the police[18] force (in case of two founders of WOPI-U) or being the widow of the Resident District Commissioner (in case of a founder KIWEPI) meant that they were able to access social networks more easily and were also able to garner support from larger organisations both locally and internationally. For example, one of the founders of WOPI-U pointed out that a friend of hers had contacts with the British High Commission and was able to access some initial financial support that supplemented their personal donations.

Rosalba Oywa, founder of PVP, for example, was working at ACORD at the time. She contacted PANOS and sought funding from them so that they could assist women get the necessary health care. The founder of WAN (Key Informant N) also got involved via a research project that was led by the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), whilst the founder of Live Again, held a senior position in the Mothers Union - a large catholic women's organisation that mobilised women at community level. Other women activists also had established relationships with the Acholi Religious Leaders Initiative (ARLPI) which helped with the distribution of resources.

[18] Note that this is a title that the research participant used. The actual titles for senior positions in the police are: Inspector General of Police, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Assistant Inspector General of Police, Senior Commissioner of Police, Commissioner of Police, Assistant Commissioner of Police.

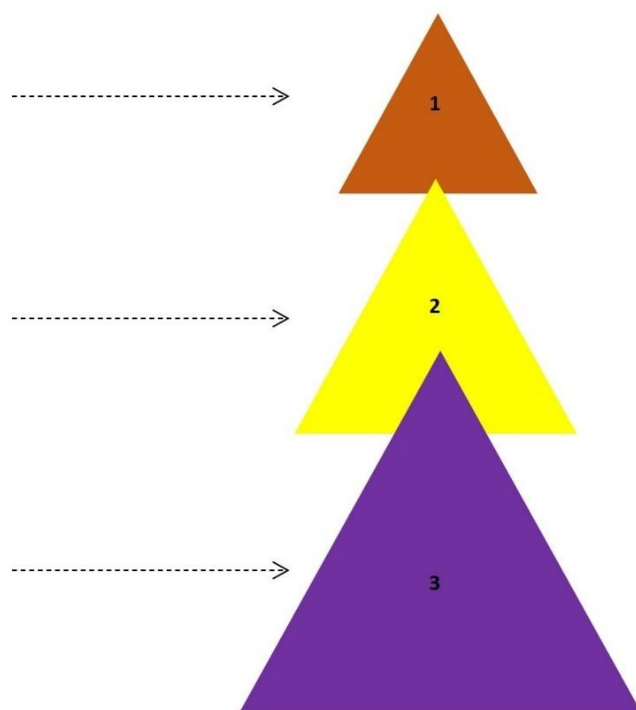
These personal and institutional social networks were drawn on while each of the founders encouraged the women they were assisting to meet in groups (such as small peace clubs) and explore ways of growing crops for food together, trading, setting up small businesses, or starting micro credit schemes. This was especially the case with founders of WOPI-U, KIWEPI, and PVP who explicitly focused on providing food and clothing during the early years of setting up the peace groups. Founders of KICWA seemed to be primarily motivated by their collective concern for the children brought back from captivity. They negotiated with local government and army officials so that they were allowed to feed the children. They expressed their concerns as 'mothers' who simply wanted to care for the children who were being kept at the army barracks. Here, motherhood was used as social leverage and motivation to create KICWA. In the early stages of KIWEPI's community activities with formerly abducted children, motherhood was also centred in their negotiations with rebel leaders to allow children who were abducted to return to their families. One founder member convinced a senior rebel in the LRA to return because she knew his mother who was ill and wanted to see him before she died. They used their membership of ARLPI and their reputation as 'mothers' who were assisting children and calling for peace, as a way of gaining trust with the rebel groups.

As they built a reputation of trust with the broader community, these small groupings of women were eventually noticed by international development organisations who assisted with micro-finance and loan schemes; larger income generation projects; adult literacy programmes; small scale agricultural projects; legal aid and medical assistance schemes. International development organisations such as CARE International, AVSI and USAID all played a role in assisting these women's initiatives. KIWEPI, WOPI-U, and WAN also began to monitor government post-conflict programmes such as PRDP and NUSAF. This meant that there was a further widening of their institutional leverage.

In terms of John Paul Lederach's Peacebuilding Pyramid, track two (level two) explains the relevance of interacting with established leaders of various religious affiliations and CBOs or NGOs who have credibility. The peace groups moved from acting as grassroots leaders of small community-based initiatives (track one level) to track two level actors who implemented projects together with larger international organisations. Their activities became more structured in a way that enabled them to leverage their social positions in society to build peace that especially addressed the various ways in which displacement, abduction, abandonment and

mass violence affected women and girls. The strategic way in which they negotiated the re-integration of abducted children relied on gendered perceptions of responsibility embedded in the clan system. This intersected with embodied and perceived ideas of motherhood, and other feminine roles within the extended family, which they leveraged to enter contested spaces and secure material and social resources for the most vulnerable. Thus, women's peace groups were able to gain 'credibility capital' as they moved from small scale initiatives with scarce resources to initiatives that were of a broader scale and that attracted donor funding from larger peace and development organisations, both local and international.

Figure 6: Type of actors and activities of women's peace groups (Lederach, 1997)



Sen (1999: 190) offers a useful way of understanding women's agency in addressing inequality in society and how this can be inextricably intertwined with an improvement in their own well-being and that of the broader community. Sen states the following:

> The active agency of women cannot, in any serious way, ignore the urgency of rectifying many inequalities that blight the well-being of women and subject them to unequal treatment; thus the agency role must be concerned with women's well-being also. Similarly, coming from the other end, any practical attempt at enhancing the well-being of women cannot but draw on the agency of women themselves in bringing about

> change. So, the well-being aspect and the agency aspect of women's movements inevitably have a substantial intersection (Sen, 1999:190).

When considering the transformational aspect (Galtung, 1996) of women's peacebuilding activities it is worth giving closer scrutiny to the way society deals with trauma caused by mass militarised violence of the scale that occurred in Northern Uganda. Their attempts to deal with such immense trauma is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

5.5. Chapter summary

There are three main sets of findings in this chapter, all of which shed light on what happened to gender identities in a context of war and peacebuilding. The first set of findings refers to women peace activists' assessment of how the war impacted men and masculinities and the second set of findings indicates women peace activists' perceptions of the effects of the war on women and shifts that occurred in families. These two sets of findings address objectives 1 and 2 of this research because they offer insights on particular histories of armed conflict in Uganda and women's experiences of the war. The third set of findings is about women's agentic responses to an unfolding humanitarian crisis. This set of findings addresses objective 2 which pertains to women's experiences of armed conflict and objective 3 which refers to women's contributions to peacebuilding.

5.5.1. Women's assessment of the effect of war on men and masculinities

When it came to perspectives on masculinities, women who founded peace groups experienced masculinities as having been destabilised in a number of ways. First, they explained that men were unable to enact their masculine power because they were either killed, abducted or lost control over cattle and land that were key to their social status within their clans. This impacted their capacity to address community needs related to displacement. When they fled from fighting in rural areas and moved to towns, they did not have cattle, land or social status within their clan system which further emasculated them. Thus, they were rendered 'impotent' in being able to deal with the unfolding humanitarian crisis. Founders of women's peace groups explained that these 'fractured masculinities' could therefore not play a meaningful role in recreating livelihoods and renegotiating a sense of social cohesion for those who fled from rural areas and settled in Kitgum, Gulu, and Lira. The formation of peace groups for women was one route through which women in towns sought to assist women who had been displaced and were unsupported by their husbands, fathers, and brothers. The women explained that they

also found patrilineal inheritance systems to be inappropriate for making alternative livelihoods possible, especially as they related to land for women who had returned from captivity or whose husbands had been abducted or killed. These women could no longer rely on their husbands' clans to access land to cultivate food to feed their families.

Founders of peace groups also gave insights into the ways these 'fractured masculinities' interfaced with humanitarian and development projects. Many men felt uneasy with the prevalence of women's empowerment projects that made it possible for some women to gain social and material leverage. Men struggled to take advantage of resources made available by development aid. They left the responsibility for the collection of material handouts largely to women and rarely initiated any kind of alternative livelihoods for their families. Women in this study reported that most men were estranged from many development efforts, became depressed, succumbed to suicide and/or resorted to drinking heavily. Founder members of peace groups were also concerned with the presence of many young men who were ex-militia who terrorised people in the towns. These young men would attack people, robbing them of food, and raping women. This evidence points to previous research (Akello, 2019; Allen, et.al, 2020; Parker, M. et. al, 2012) that found that repatriation strategies provided by Amnesty International were ineffective in bringing about demilitarisation and reintegration of these boys and young men into civilian life.

5.5.2. Effects of the war on women and shifts in families

The second set of findings were about women peace activists' perceptions of the effects of the war on themselves, as well as on women who were displaced by the war. In explaining their experiences of armed conflict, they pointed out that widowhood, forced marriage, and an increase in the number of orphaned children meant that women's care-giving responsibilities increased. By looking after orphaned children, grand-children, and children of other members of the extended family (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles), their maternal role within the extended family expanded at a time when there were minimal socio-economic options available. Women peace activists explained that they initially managed to support their families and a broader group of displaced women and children by drawing from their own resources, gathered from friends and family. They had witnessed first-hand, the ways many displaced women struggled to survive on handouts from humanitarian organisations, petty trade or by collecting food from abandoned fields or small gardens in and around towns where people settled. As the number of people displaced from the war increased, they then decided to set up small women's peace

groups whose very first activities involved encouraging displaced women to set up small income generating activities to help feed their families.

This finding revealed that mass displacement and violence destabilised several traditional and cultural practices including gender norms relating to femininity amongst predominantly Acholi and Langi communities that reside in the districts where the study was conducted. This occurred in the face of an inadequate humanitarian response alongside 'fractured masculinities' and destabilised masculine power. There appeared to be a broadening of (older) women's implicit power as mothers, aunts, and sisters-in-law that shifted women's place within the extended family. Women who founded peace groups and some women who were displaced experienced an increase in their material (as opposed to discursive) power within and beyond their fathers' or husbands' patrilineage.

5.5.3. Women's agentic response to a humanitarian crisis

Peace activists' social positioning made it possible for them to respond to an unfolding humanitarian crisis. The women who founded peace groups already had social standing in Kitgum, Lira and Gulu before they became peace activists. In explaining what was going on in their lives during the height of the war, most women who founded peace groups (aside from founder members of WAN) lived in Kitgum, Lira, or Gulu and had some social and material resources that enabled them to provide assistance to people who had fled from fighting in remote areas. Their material resources were linked to having a formal job, ownership of or access to land or a house in towns where people fled to. Those who worked in the civil service (mostly as teachers or administrators), for example, lived in a relatively large (two to three roomed) government owned house with a yard. Many of these women willingly shared their land and homes with extended family members and other displaced people who had nowhere to go. Furthermore, they had strong links to particular networks and resources within their ethnic groupings which enabled them to respond to needs even before international development aid had arrived in the area.

They were also able to leverage resources via the social status they held in the community (as teachers, civil servants, church members, wives and daughters of civil servants), and their 'positions' (for example as sister, mother, or wife) in extended family networks. With most having attained secondary education, their proficiency in spoken or written English enabled them to communicate with officials in government offices and humanitarian and development programmes, which in turn meant accessing larger social networks, and much needed

community resources. When international development institutions such as CARE International, International Rescue Committee, and the UN arrived in Northern Uganda, these founders of peace groups networked with these institutions during and after the war. Thus, these women peace activists were further able to influence a wide range of post-war recovery efforts.

In the process of ensuring that displaced women and their children had livelihood options, the peace groups lobbied for women to inherit land and by doing so, they challenged patrilineal land inheritance systems. They got involved in land claim processes so that they could ensure that these women had access to a piece of land that they could till and earn a living from. This entailed the peace groups challenging Acholi and Langi inheritance systems so that widows could inherit land from their husband's lineage. They argued that patriarchal beliefs and customs that limited women's access to and/or ownership of land prevented these formerly abducted women and their children from obtaining a sustainable livelihood. For these women activists, helping previously abducted women build a sustainable livelihood was central to any peace-building effort and hence they were emboldened to challenge the patrilineal land inheritance systems to this end.

CHAPTER 6: THEORISING PEACEBUILDING FROM WOMEN ACTIVISTS' PERSPECTIVES

6.1. Introduction

This chapter examines participants' self-identification as women and their understanding of peacebuilding. The findings are linked to objectives 1, 3 and 4 (see chapter 1, section 1.4) of the study and sections C and D of the interview guide (see Appendix 1, page 221) that elicited information about the research participants' understanding of building peace and notions of womanhood.

The Chapter outlines a major theme that emerged from the data: theorising peacebuilding – women activists' perspectives. This theme was conceptualised after the second stage of analysis of all the findings. Table 11 lists category factors that emerged that informed the labelling of the theme. These category factors are: conceptual links between womanhood, peacebuilding and gender equality; peace as material well-being through economic empowerment; peace as psychological healing/trauma healing; peace as rehabilitating masculinities; peace as micro-mediation and justice. These category factors reflect participants presupposed ideas about womanhood, their self-identification as women and their understanding and practical experience of building peace in the communities their peace groups worked. Further, the findings are discussed in light of theoretical assumptions about peacebuilding, gender equality, socio economic change, and psychosocial healing.

Table 11: Theorising peacebuilding – Women activists' perspective

Theme	Related Objectives	Category factors
Theorising Peacebuilding from Women Activists' Perspective	Objective 1 (partly) – investigate women's ideas about conflict and peacebuilding Objective 3 – ascertain women's contributions to peacebuilding Objective 4 – challenges women peace activists faced	Conceptual links between womanhood, peacebuilding and gender equality Peace as material well-being through economic empowerment Peace as psychological healing/trauma healing Peace as rehabilitating masculinities Peace as micro-mediation and justice

Section 6.2 titled 'Theorising peacebuilding and womanhood' and Section 6.3 titled 'Peacebuilding and reconsidering Acholi and Langi Femininities' describes and discusses participants articulation of conceptual links they made between womanhood and their experiences of building peace. Section 6.4 titled 'Debating peace and gender equality' discusses quotes that reflect participants articulation of conceptual connections they made between their definition of peace and their ideas about gender equality. Sections 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7 describes and discusses particular activities that were undertaken by women's peace groups included in this study. Section 6.5 titled 'Peace as 'rehabilitating' masculinities – Lacor Makwiri' describes and discusses activities that aimed to challenge masculine power within the home and the community by pushing to change local masculine social norms. Sections 6.6 titled 'Peace as material well-being within and beyond liberal economies' and section 6.7 titled 'Peace as psychosocial and bodily healing' describe and discuss income generation activities and group counselling processes undertaken by peace groups included in this study.

6.2. Theorising peacebuilding and womanhood

The findings indicate that the women's approach to peacebuilding was shaped by the impact of the war and that their peace groups and organisations started as a response to various immediate individual and collective needs. The kinds of projects they established were an attempt to address the micro-complexities of displacement, destitution and extreme physical and psychosocial violence. John Paul Lederach (1997) argues that formal state-led processes are inadequate for contemporary conflict contexts where parties live in close geographic proximity, have direct experience of violent trauma, and a history of grievance and enmity that has accumulated over generations. The war in Northern Uganda had all these elements. In accordance with Lederach's (1997: 24) definition, the study found that informants' understanding of peacebuilding was "…rooted in and responsive to the experiential and subjective realities..." that shaped their perspectives and needs. The following quotes represent some of these perspectives:

> *For me I look at peace, this way, everything that we do for human survival, or. every good thing that we expect or we believe in as being peaceful…So, I'm looking at having something in your pocket, having peace in the pocket. So if you have cash, then you can remain healthy, , that is for me also 'peace' …., I cannot be peaceful when I have pain somewhere. I cannot...one cannot be peaceful when there are guns, you're not secured. You're seeing panga's, you're seeing mambas, , bullets… every time you are on the run. You don't know your next destination… that is a state of having no peace. So I believe that being peaceful is actually when everyone is free, everyone is safe wherever they are, free and safe to do whatever they want and you are actually not scared of anything* (Key Informant E, staff, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Here peace is expressed in terms of substantive freedoms, similar to Sen's (1999) idea of freedom that is possible when people's social and economic freedom (access to education and health care), political and civil freedoms (the liberty to participate in public discussion and vote) are not constrained in any way. Thus one could argue that peace or development would mean "…the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over-activity of repressive states" (Sen, 1999:3). Sen also refers to 'protective security' as a substantive freedom that all should have. All should have freedom from fear and

violence. This is in keeping with the notion of human security that gained international currency in development agencies in the early 1990s.The United Nations defines human security as 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' (UNDP, 1994).[19]

The participants' explanation of peace coincided with ideas about 'gendered' security which is prominent in existing feminist literature on peace and security. According to Hudson (1998, 2005, 2006), Lewis (2006), Muthien (2004) and Reardon and Hans (2010), a feminist reading of human security includes the safeguarding of bodily and personal integrity. Thus, all forms of interpersonal violence are taken into account not only the broader social, political and economic violence experienced through various deprivations. Participants were clear about this:

> *Of course peace can never be built where we don't have positive inter and intra personal relationships… and love… but I think also that peace is not only the absence of the gun ….peace can be built when the environment around us, the political, social and economical are also addressed . When all those are in a state of harmony then peace can be built. We cannot say we are going to have peace when the gun is quiet but there are so many things that are still happening* (Key Informant T, founder, Live Again, February 2015).

This perspective resonates with Johan Galtung's (1996) ideas of a 'positive peace'. Galtung argues that the basic needs of survival, well-being and freedom have to be taken into consideration. A founder of People's Voice for Peace summed up the demands of women at the Juba peace talks when those signing the agreement assumed that there was already a cessation of hostilities between warring parties:

> *The women said no, they have not ceased hostilities at all because we are still being raped …. If that agenda item is a reality and they have ceased being violent to anybody*

[19] International debate on human security began with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of 1994, which resulted in the compilation of a 'Human Development Report' that describes 'human security' in its broadest terms- a people centred approach that ensures that individuals and societies have both 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear (UNDP, 1994). This approach partly emerged out of a post 'cold war' period in which seemingly more developed states in the North became increasingly concerned with reducing poverty in the south through the promotion of economic growth based on investment and the application of science and technology.

*then we would not be suffering like that. And so for us for that agenda item to be fulfilled we want A, B, C. Talking about …not hearing the gun shots or somebody following you with a gun…is not enough but this safety, personal safety on a day to day level being able to go and look for water without somebody beating you or raping you, being able to go to the market without anybody actually abusing you on the way and all of that. They said because our bodies are still being abused we know that there is no cessation of hostilities… it is still going on. I was so impressed with what they said (*Founder, PVP, 24 December 2014).

Women's refusal to define 'hostilities' as that of a cessation of gunfire was in fact revealing a first-hand experience of what Galtung (1996) defines as negative peace. The women were highlighting 'gendered violence' as part of a broader systemic patriarchal structural violence. Other women included the concept of justice in their framing of 'peace':

To me, peace is justice. The two cannot be separated like peace is not just stability after an armed conflict or violence. Peace is about you know having hope for the future like your tomorrow is secured, you are sorted fully, like you know that you cannot be violated again (Key Informant N, staff and founder, WAN, December 2013).

Lederach (1997) uses the concept of a 'Just Peace'. Giving amnesty is one way of arriving at a peace agreement but many also call for retribution and compensation for sustainable peace to be possible. Women in war situations had to contend with multiple rapes with no justice being meted out to the perpetrators. Rape was ostensibly used as a weapon of war yet in so-called 'peacetimes' rape was still being perpetrated with very little justice for victims. Thus, the concept of an all-embracing positive peace is what these women expressed . One participant referred to the specific initiatives of her peace group as being part of 'peacebuilding':

All the different programmes, from peace promotion, reduction of GBV also, include promotion of women's rights. All come towards peace. Health promotion, all the things that WOPI does is towards peacebuilding. Then, what WOPI looks forward to, that is its vision is to see a harmonious and peaceful society where people coexist freely without any fear… (Key Informant E, staff, WOPI-U, December 2013).

These findings align with other research on women's peacebuilding efforts (Cockburn 2007; El-Bushra, 2008; McKay & Mazurana, 2001; Moser & Clark, 2001; Pankhurst, 2003) that reveal an expanded and more nuanced gender perspective that also includes transformation of violent structural arrangements. This is in contrast to many top-down, neo-liberal, state-led

approaches. In this study, participants conceptualised and practiced 'peacebuilding' mainly in relation to material well-being; psychosocial healing; bodily health, mediation and justice and the rehabilitation of masculinities. These ideas were expressed in the descriptions of the kinds of activities they undertook in the community-based peace groups that they founded. The following tables summarise the main peace-building activities that they referred to.

Table 12: Types of peacebuilding activities

Organisation	Peace as Material Well-being	Peace as Psychosocial Healing	Peace as Bodily Health	Peace as Mediation & Justice
KIWEPI	Collection and handout of food, clothing, etc for displaced families, especially those in and around IDP Camps. Shelter for formerly abducted women and children. Village Saving schemes. Farmer Field Support projects. Dialogue and mediation sessions to mitigate land conflicts.	Group storytelling sessions with formerly abducted women. Reintegration of formerly abducted with families. Community drama to raise awareness and dialogue on -effects of war and reduce stigma. Cultural performance competitions and exchange visits between groups.	HIV/AIDS Counselling. Surgery and medicine to heal reproductive health complications.	Legal justice for survivors of gender-based violence. Encourage people in militia groups to return home and stop fighting. Dialogue and mediation sessions to mitigate land conflicts. Women taking part in peace talks.
WOPI-U	Collection and handout of food, clothing, etc for displaced families, especially those in and around IDP camps. Saving Schemes for Women's peace clubs.	Storytelling with Women's Peace Clubs. Reintegration of formerly abducted with families. Community drama to raise awareness and dialogue on effects of war and reduce stigma. Cultural performance competitions and exchange visits between groups.	HIV/AIDS Counselling. Surgery and medicine to heal reproductive health complications.	Women taking part in peace talks.

Table12: Types of peacebuilding activities (CONTINUED)				
Organisation	**Peace as Material Well-being**	**Peace as Psychosocial Healing**	**Peace as Bodily Health**	Peace as Mediation & Justice
WAN	Saving Schemes and income generation projects for formerly abducted women and their children. Advocate for reparations for formerly abducted women and children their families.	Group storytelling sessions with formerly abducted women. Reintegration of formerly abducted with families and community. Awareness raising to reduce stigma against formerly abducted women and their children . Exchange visits between women's groups whose members include formerly abducted women.		Advocate for reparations for formerly abducted women.
KICWA	Shelter, clothing and food for formerly abducted children. Village saving schemes for families of children who were integrated and broader communities in which they live.	Reintegration of formerly abducted children. Awareness raising to reduce stigma against formerly abducted women and their children. Spiritual healing ceremonies (cleansing rituals).	Provide general health care for children at KICWA.	

Table 12: Types of peacebuilding activities (CONTINUED)

Organisation	Peace as Material Well-being	Peace as Psychosocial Healing	Peace as Bodily Health	Peace as Mediation & Justice
PVP	Saving schemes for people who experienced rape, or maimed, widows, women rejected by spouses.	Trauma counselling through storytelling. Community drama to raise awareness and dialogue on effects of war and reduce stigma.	Paid for hospital visits and medication for women and children.	
Live Again	Dialogue sessions to mitigate land conflicts. Micro credit schemes/income generation projects. Distribution of food to children. Training mothers on nutrition for child and early childhood development centres.	Trauma healing sessions for women and families affected by war – especially widows and women whose children were missing. Cultural performance competitions and exchange visits between groups Spiritual healings sessions (cleansing ceremonies).	Nutritional health awareness for mothers.	Dialogue and mediation sessions to mitigate land conflicts.

Participants' narratives about womanhood, gender equality, and peacebuilding give further credence to the key role that feminism and peacebuilding have played in the Ugandan conflict.

6.3. Peacebuilding and reconsidering Acholi and Langi femininities

When probed about whether there is a link between their definition of peace and their identity as women, many participants explained that women tend to be more peaceful because they are often the ones who look after the family either as mothers or because they are naturally more nurturing and empathetic than men. Whilst it is clear that it was mostly women rather than men who chose to reach out to the vulnerable, there were also women who did not participate in this peace-work. In fact, some women also played a role in promoting, colluding or engaging in violence. This study however, focused on women who actively went out of their way to promote peace in various ways (Barry, 2005; Charlesworth, 2008; Pankhurst, 2003). Some respondents argued that women had a natural inclination to take care of their children and look after people in need as has been found in previous research on women and peacebuilding.

> *For me I look at why would I say women are more the peace builders? You take it from the homes, normally in Acholi culture when people come into homes where they are having some kind of disagreement, an elderly woman moves from inside and would crawl in to bring peace and to talk to the sides and people would listen. Men are more iron but for us it is more about pour water on fire…. I don't know why but naturally that is really it seems that way in our culture that we are not escalators of violence and more of peace builders and we are more reconcilers in our settings. And I think that became very evident during the war, evidenced by all these different groups of women coming up* (Key Informant K, founder, Live Again).

> *And I look at the ability of being at peace with myself, the ability of having the opportunity of doing what I feel is right, that is what I feel I call peace for me. When I have enough food in the house and my children are not really suffering because of this and that, I feel that that is peace…* (Key Informant K, Rosalba, founder, PVP, December 2013).

These roles of motherhood and nurturer were not perceived as oppressive or burdensome, but as a powerful asset that could mobilise other women to also respond to immediate community needs. These qualities were explained as already being present in Acholi and Langi cultures' conceptions of womanhood.

It's that heart of a mother, you feel for the rest. Like you care for your children, you see others suffering, you see children suffering, you see fellow mothers like you and then you think suppose that was me in their shoes and then how would you feel, let me alleviate the suffering a little bit (Key Informant J, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

You know that as a woman you have your rights as woman your dignity is there, you can mentor your children and bring them up the way you really want, you are safe. You know that even your children are safe, not just today but you are safe and that is beyond just having the armed conflict going on or stopping. It's about transforming your life as a woman, you know that your life – it is also that you can have access to your property, that your health needs are taken care of; your children are taken care of, you have the capability as a woman. To me that is peace if as a woman my children's future is secured… (Key Informant N, staff and founder, WAN, December 2013).

This finding concurs with Harris' (2012: 477-8) research on gender age systems that found that (especially older) women were not simply downtrodden but held a certain level of tacit power. Harris argues that this power is more discursive (than materially practical) and it is restricted to women's age-gender dispositions within their fathers' or husbands' (patri)lineage. Depending on their age and loci within their fathers' or husbands' extended family, women held implicit power within households and the patrilineage (as mothers, wives, sister-in-laws, aunts, and so on) by virtue of the activities that they supervised together with their children (making pots, brewing beer, fishing, and farming tasks), or as diviners. One of the more powerful women able to exercise a degree of authority over other women in the chiefdom was the *dak ker*. She was the woman who married the *Rwot* (chief) on the occasion of his succession and provided the heir to succeed him.

Women's traditional power was evident in certain positions they held within chiefdoms. One that stood out was that of *Rwot Okoro* - a local name for a female chief. One member of KIWEPI's peace advocacy group in Namukora sub county (Interviewed in January, 2015) was a *Rwot Okoro* and a local government councillor. She explained that she was chosen by the chief to be a *Rwot Okoro* for four sub counties. Through other *Rwot Okoros* at parish and village levels, she had authority or jurisdiction to bring women together from across four parishes in the sub county to deal with community problems or gain the support of women on particular matters (male chief, interview, January 2015). This information was corroborated with a *Rwot* in Namukora who was also a member of KIWEPI's peace advocacy group and

actually appointed a *Rwot Okoro* himself. Both informants (Rwot and Rwot Okoro in separate interviews) explained that one of the main roles of Rwot Okoros was to perform a rain dance called *Acut.* This role was becoming less common because religion (mostly Christianity) had changed some of their indigenous cultural practices. Their main responsibilities presently centres around ensuring women's participation in decisions within chiefdoms, communication with women in the sub-counties and responding to disputes that women were involved in. Examples of disputes she dealt with included accusations of witchcraft against women; land disputes in which women were parties; and disputes within a family, often involving married couples. There seems to be no published research about these female chiefs amongst Langi and Acholi communities, so I was unable to make more of this finding. What is however interesting is the extent to which they may have used their chieftainship role to build peace.

As discussed in chapter 5, the war seemed to have augmented women's discursive and material power, especially in the face of displacement, destitution and extreme physical and psychosocial violence. An informant referred to how women who were raped and forcibly married during captivity still cared for their children and raised them in very difficult circumstances. Several participants indicated that during and after the war, more women than men were involved in community peace efforts.

> *Even if you go to the community ...rally, I mean I don't know how they put it, a debate the contribution of men compared to the contribution of women, you'll even hear some men testify with their own mouth that it is the women who are doing a lot. And this tells me that if it is the women who are doing a lot ... which means women are trying hard to build peace because peace begins in the family, when there's peace in the family people can do a lot of developmental things in the community. And, when you call for a meeting, you will hardly find a good number of men, you will find that the majority of members are women* (Key Informant Y, founder, KICWA, February 2015).

> *To link it with the war situation and to me I think people came to realise that, with the destructions made during the war and if a girl or a woman is empowered to do something, she does it with all of her heart. she commits herself.... So, it opened the eyes of many of the community to see how important a woman is in a community, in a society and in a family. When a woman sits you down, she can talk to you with the whole of her heart. They don't cover things* (Key Informant L, founder, KIWEPI).

Participants' focus on 'peaceful femininities' and their human rights may have been influenced by their familiarity with United Nations Resolution 1325 and the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa that were adopted and publicised in the early 2000s. WAN, KIWEPI, WOPI-U all refer to UNSCR 1325 in their project documents and have been funded by organisations that ensure that these protocols are adhered to. The preamble of 1325 reaffirms ''the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building'' and goes on to emphasise ''the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution'' (Gibbings, 2011: 530). Article 10 of the AU Protocol also refers to women's right to "a peaceful existence and the right to participation in the promotion and maintenance of peace" and commits states to women's increased participation in peace education and all structures and processes for conflict prevention, management and resolution of conflict, including structures established for the management of camps and settlements for asylum seekers, returnees, refugees and displaced people (African Union, 2021a).

This discourse suggests that some women do have a special role in peacebuilding and thus should be given equal participation with men at the top level when it comes to peacebuilding and conflict prevention (Charlesworth, 2008). However, women cannot always be easily disentangled from political, ethnic or class divisions which are intimately woven into facets of the armed conflict and may not always constitute 'peaceful' femininities. There are plenty who actively choose not to do this and play key roles in promoting, colluding in, or engaging in, violence (and some women take on both roles at different times in their lives). In either case it is rarely experienced as much of a choice. Some are even overtly engaged with certain fighting forces, taking up armed resistance to the war (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011).

6.4. Debating peace and gender equality

When asked about the link between gender equality and peace, a more varied notion of womanhood was evident. There was reference to both women's and men's role in building peace, women's vulnerabilities in relation to men's, peace as the absence of conflict between genders and the changes that are required in gender relations for peace to be possible.

> *So in a way we can look at gender equality as a means to sustainable peace, in the home, in the society, in the family… I think that if we had gender equality in the sense*

that we had opportunity all the time to discuss and agree in certain things then maybe men would not have done what they did. Because in all these wars the people who were involved in active fighting, the majority were men. There are some women who got involved but they were few (Key Informant K, founder, PVP, December 2013).

Like I said, gender equality and peace it's about accepting the contribution of women within the context of realizing men and women work together and giving space to women in that respect. ...to me feminism is linked to women's role; I think it's still the same. To me feminism is linked to gender equality, I don't look at feminism like 'women pushing for things against masculinity, against men', it's women saying that we can do something, we are also humans, we have a brain, we need the space to do this. To me that is feminism and it's about respecting gender equality (Key Informant N, staff and founder, WAN, December 2013).

Key Informants understood gender equality as being about how both men and women should be contributing to building peace equally to ensure sustainable peace. However, women's limited participation in government-led peace talks was highlighted as was men's resistance to rehabilitation programmes. They explained that they understood women to be, 'natural' nurturers and carers, taking on conciliatory roles, while men on the other hand, tended to take on more militant roles, providing for the family's security, exercising discipline. They explained that they found that men tended to be less concerned with assisting vulnerable populations.

So in issues of peace...both genders have a role to play. Even in the....peace negotiations, peace agreement, both genders have to participate because like the women have a special role, calling back the... fighters from the bush. You know, they are our own children. If we talk to them well, chances are high they will listen more to their mothers, than listen to the fathers who will come back and cane you (Key informant E, staff, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Peace is related to gender equality because if you want to achieve sustainable peace we need to involve both sexes [sic] ... In supporting the women, we also need to engage men. The link is that both peacebuilding and gender require the participation, the contribution of both the women and the men as well... (Key Informant D, staff, KWEPI, December 2013).

A staff member of WAN, who had taken part in years of research with formerly abducted women stated that she noticed that men and women's narratives about the war were quite different:

> *Whereas the guys remember the technical aspect of the conflict and how things were done here and there, women remember the emotional…, the family and how it was all knitted together...* (Key Informant N, staff and founder, WAN, December 2013).

Some participants felt that women contributed more towards peacebuilding, with limited efforts from men and this created an imbalance that jeopardised sustainable peace. Some further reasoned that there was a need to 'restore' men's masculine roles so that society can regain a sense of social, economic, and political stability that was destabilised by the war.

A staff member who coordinates a project about women's access to (legal) justice in KIWEPI referred to (Acholi) marital customs which considers women as the property of men.

> *Actually, if you don't address gender equality, one side is missing…because the one who is already empowered would look at the one who is not empowered as nothing. Why do I say so? Just giving you an example. You find generally us Acholi, the traditional thinking of men towards women was not good…because if you are a woman, you are married, you are looked at as a property. Because you were bought, because they had cattle, they take a lot of cattle to your family. So, you have no say, you have no so say completely…A woman is not entitled to anything in her family, except maybe utensils. ... If any disagreement arises in the family, it is always the woman who is blamed. You are beaten seriously…. But if we don't look at gender equality, peace will not prevail* (Key informant X, staff, KIWEPI, January 2015).

A founder member of KICWA referred to patriarchal norms that cause tension and violence because only the husbands' views are considered to be 'right'.

> *For someone to realise gender equality and peace should go together…If they don't go together then I don't think things will not go well. That is why on this land things are not going well because in our culture they say a woman is under a man so must always be under a man and a decision must always be made only by a man. …. But when you say a woman is given time to actually express herself and her decision is also taken into account that is when we say ok I think there is peace…. But here culture is still tying us down. It's tying us down* (Key Informant Y, founder, KICWA, February 2015).

This framing of the link between gender, peace and culture implies that the women included in this study were of the view that peacebuilding requires a transformation of patriarchal norms. Gendered identities are not just acknowledged as being different and unique 'assets' to the process of building peace in society but were conceptualised as oppressive. As with previous research on gender and conflict, 'violent masculinities' were recognised as a cause of instability at the micro level of heteronormative marital relations in the domestic sphere (Cockburn, 2007; Moser & Clarke, 2001). Clarke, (2008; 2013) and Cockburn (2010) point to the importance of transforming histories of militarism that continue to (re)produce militarised patriarchal gender identities, before and after war. Even though the community peace groups targeted in this study were founded to support predominantly women and children, they also attempted to 'rehabilitate masculinities'. It is important to note that 'peaceful femininities' and 'violent masculinities' are terms that are open to interrogation since they may promote yet another binary falsehood.

6.5. Peace as 'rehabilitating' masculinities – *Lacor Makwiri*

KIWEPI and WOPI-U actually set up projects to change masculinities in the domestic sphere through 'men-only' projects that valorised men who performed 'peaceful' masculinities. At the time of the study, the programmes aimed to transform certain 'violent masculinities' (violent, drunk and irresponsible men) that the war seemed to have aided and abetted. In 2009 KIWEPI began a project titled "Male- Engage". It grew out of a women's empowerment project. According to a (male) staff member who coordinated KIWEPI's women's empowerment programme at the time of the study, KIWEPI's core management team realised that women's empowerment would not be complete if men were not 'brought on board' (interview, December 2013). He gave an example of KIWEPI's village saving scheme in which it was useful to have both husband and wife in the same saving scheme. This ensured that a husband was aware of the principles of saving and could therefore not easily undermine the wife's efforts. This was because he too would be bound by the group's saving guidelines and get 'counselled' by other members of the group if he defaulted or wasted the savings on buying alcohol. Apart from deliberately inviting men to join saving schemes, KIWEPI partnered with CARE International and began 'educating' the community, and especially men, on the importance of women's empowerment programmes and men's role as partners with women in the home and community. In conversation with communities, they worked with, KIWEPI's

interpretation of 'peaceful' masculinities included the following five elements: men who were not violent in the home; men who did not abuse alcohol; men who financially supported the family; men who assist with household chores and men who allow their wives to make some decisions in the home. Community members voted for those men who 'role-modelled' these characteristics and they received special recognition at an awards ceremony in which they were officially named as *Lacor Makwiri* – role model men:

> *Lacor Makwiri should have the following qualities. One, his children should all be attending school, there should be nothing like school drop- out. Two, his household should not experience food insecurity, food should be enough in that household. Three, he should not be a person who is violent - each and every time battering the woman, and all that is, those are some of the things they came up with. He should also should not drink irresponsibly, like coming back home at midnight. Lachor makwiri is not of that nature, so they listed all those qualities. They should have the necessary health facilities, the latrine should be there at home, the rubbish pit, the shelter for bathing, the shelter for animal and poultry should be separate from the human habitat. That is how they define him, the role model man. Then afterward, they nominated names after the campaign, the community went into secret ballot voting, that is how the 39 role model men were selected* (Key Informant D, staff, KIWEPI, December 2014).

A review of policy briefs and reports by CARE International that funds some of these peace groups, suggests that participants' narratives about the significance of building peace, gender equality and transforming masculinities could also have been largely influenced by their group's institutional links with CARE International.

At the time of this study, WOPI-U had been funded by Isis-WICCE to co-implement a community-based awareness project on a gender-based violence prevention project called SASA. SASA (which means 'now' in Kiswahili) was actually designed by two Kampala-based organisations – Raising Voices and the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP). Acording to Abramsky et al., (2014: 3):

> The central focus of the intervention is to promote a critical analysis and discussion of power and power inequalities - not only of the ways in which men and women may misuse power and the consequences of this for their intimate relationships and communities, but also on how people can use their power positively to affect and sustain change at an individual and community level.

WOPI-U trained a larger number of men (than women) using a specific methodology that aimed at creating "…a critical mass committed to and able to create social norm change". A founder member of WOPI-U refers to the benefits of including men in WOPI-U's work:

> *In our recent SASA project the majority of our community activists are men and I want to say it is wonderful because if you want to address SGBV then approach it through the men who are the perpetrators…I want to share an experience of one of them giving a testimony. Of how the SASA training alone has transformed him, he used to be a drunkard, very violent and every time he reaches home everybody including the woman run for the hills but every evening during the two weeks training, we gave them 50 Sawa out of pocket so in the next meeting with them, he gave a testimony that for the first time he gave the 50 thousand to the wife but before that he used to not give money to his wife and the woman asked him, "What is this for" And to make sure that he was telling us the truth, the brothers came to find out how their brother got transformed, "Who are these people who have transformed our brother?"…. And you know since then they are more outgoing, they reach out to the community more than the women, that's what I see* (Key Informant S, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Narratives of successful shifts in men's behaviours were sparse because the SASA project was fairly new and not all informants were directly involved in that specific project.

PVP's inclusion of men in peacebuilding projects began much earlier than KIWEPI and WOPI-U and had less direct influence from the development agencies. Their initial work was framed by data collected from research that was funded by ACORD. Rosalba Oywa (founder of PVP) explained that their initial choice to focus on rape survivors was based on the findings of the study they conducted that sought to document the impact of the war on women. However, when they began to interact with people in IDP camps, men asked them why PVP left them out when they too had been tortured and maimed. Men were then included in trauma counselling, treatment of wounds, and income generation activities (interview, December 2013). Her narrative of 'restoring' masculinities also included an assessment of patriarchal norms that they held on to, which affected gender equality and women's notions of peace.

Men in particular were resistant to 'gender equality' and 'women's rights' insofar as they eroded social norms that privileged males.

> *…we are talking about it and saying there is need to bring women in, that's when the men say, now you want to compete with us…. The men the first time we went to radio*

> *they were very arrogant and harsh to us but then later on when we started doing things quietly, things died down and we didn't get those bitter comments, those nasty comments* (Key Informant J, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

> *... (I)n trying to promote gender equality it is going to bring that kind of conflict and therefore we shouldn't stop, we should continue. Change of attitude actually you have to go through thick and thin because there is that resistance and so naturally as we try to advocate for gender equality we are expected to meet a lot of resistance but let's move on and try to talk about it* (Key Informant S, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

All narratives on gender equality and peacebuilding work seem to be framed within versions of heteronormative social relationships. Thus, peacebuilding projects that have addressed gender equality tended to re-inscribe notions of feminine respectability and fatherly paternal authority where 'proper women' share decision-making and household chores with 'responsible husbands'. This may be partly due to influences of cultural norms and practices, government policies and the agendas of international agencies. Feminist authors (Lewis, 2010; Mama,1997a, 2004; Tamale, 1999; Tripp 2000) have written about the complex ways in which State and donor funded development approaches have become intertwined with discourses on gender equality in African contexts. With international commitments to gender equality (discussed in Chapter 3), state and donor policies and practices in Uganda used essentialised heterosexual notions of womanhood that imagined gender equality as a process that 'added' women to development policies and projects – an approach that came to be known as 'Women in Development' (WID) /'Woman and Development' (WAD) and was especially spearheaded by international agencies such as the UN. This later shifted to 'gender mainstreaming' or 'Gender and Development' (GAD) in which gender analysis entailed a comparison of heterosexual social roles. In the last decade or so, there has been a deliberate emphasis on including men and masculinities in discourse and practice on gender equality. Lewis (2005) points out that there are ideological differences amongst feminists about western dominance in development discourse. Conservative liberal use of developmental feminist discourse competes with radical conversations about the need to deconstruct 'western' or 'northern' interpretations of 'Africanity' and to decolonise feminism. This study critically engages with liberal feminist developmental discourse without trying to separate the peacebuilding ideas under-written by western discursive dominance. As stated by Lewis (2005: 385):

> The effort to salvage past modes of thought, or to invent an entirely new language, seriously underplays the extent to which current language use, terminology and theory have become irrevocably creolised. This means that what we understand, from the vantage point of the present, to be pre-colonial and what we currently imagine to be postcolonial will always be deeply implicated in western discursive practices.

Funding received from international development organisations enabled women's community-based peace groups to hold various workshops and campaigns that highlighted the need for men to take responsibility for caring for and financially supporting their families. With clan leaders having less social significance in the community, women's peace groups took the opportunity to re-inscribe men's heterosexual social status as responsible fathers and husbands who would be respected by society if they shared decision-making and household chores with their wives.

Butler (2009: 8) suggests that war can create "…a living figure outside the norms of life…" that not only becomes a problem to be managed by normativity but seems to be that which normativity is bound to reproduce. She refers to these new norms as "…a relentless double whose ontology cannot be secured, but whose living status is open to apprehension" (Butler, 2009:8). Thus, one may argue that women's peace groups actively responded to a humanitarian crisis in the midst of vulnerable and insecure masculinities. Their efforts to fill the gaps left by men who were unable to cope can be thought of as a "…relentless double" that existed outside certain patriarchal heterosexual framings of the family. Their peacebuilding activities created versions of femininities beyond normative patriarchal expectations of womanhood within Acholi and Langi social systems. By initiating projects that offered social and material support for their families and the broader community they achieved a 'vulnerable stability'. At the same time some of their initiatives in 'rehabilitating masculinities' inadvertently reproduced patriarchal gender norms, giving rise to what Butler refers to as a 'relentless double'. The reconfiguration of family support and their efforts to 'rehabilitate' masculinities away from violence remained bound by lineage systems that presumed that the dominance of masculine status was essential for social stability and security.

Whilst women made some gains in occupying previously masculinised spaces such as taking over as 'material providers', they were blocked from shifting patriarchal power dynamics inherent in land access. Thus, women's peace attempts to replace patriarchal norms seemed to

be simultaneously constrained by them as they unconsciously and consciously reproduced masculinised norms.

6.6. Peace as material well-being within and beyond liberal economies

Economic stability together with psychosocial healing were key to the survival needs of the participants of this study. During the early stages of the formation of the peace groups, the founders responded in an unstructured way to the immediate need of other displaced women and children by sharing what they had and collecting food from others. They collected soap, salt, clothes, and food from their own households and those of friends and relatives so as to assist displaced women and children who were destitute. Later, their initiatives developed more structured approaches as the community-based peace groups grew and as they accessed donor funding from larger organisations and international aid agencies. Some of the activities they undertook were micro-enterprises such as juice making, tailoring, trading in food stuffs, rearing of animals, wine making, mushroom growing and bee keeping.

> *We had cases of women who wanted to sell market produce… we started with them. And then those who were able to grow what little income they got, they moved to certain higher levels, and they were able to earn a better income. And later on, they were able to tell us, now I am settled, my husband has come back, my children are now going to school. And told us how they were getting …. a higher interest …. We had some women who were doing extremely well who impressed us* (Key Informant K, founder member, PVP, December 2014).

The participants in these various peace groups saw economic stability as core to their peace work. Other organisations in Kitgum combined income generation projects with savings schemes often termed 'Village Loan and Savings Associations' that were (mostly) funded and coordinated by CARE International. VLSAs formed part of CARE International's efforts to rebuild communities in the north and were part of a broader programme called the Sustainable Comprehensive Response for Vulnerable Children and their Households (SCORE). This was funded by USAID. The objectives of the project were to "decrease vulnerability of critically vulnerable children and their households". The saving scheme was used as one way of "…improving VC's (vulnerable children)'s households' socio-economic status, food security and nutrition status...and strengthen household capacity to access and provide critical

services…'' Since 2013, CARE International had helped facilitate the establishment of 27, 222 VLSA groups in rural Uganda representing over half a million people. CARE (2013) states that the VLSAs saved up to 52 billion Ugandan shillings (about $19 million).

Internationally, micro-finance and micro-credit projects mark an important shift in approaches to poverty alleviation, from state-subsidised universal credit for male-headed households through "small farmer" credit programmes, to microfinance institutions targeting poor, rural women who are considered to be entrepreneurs (Rankin, 2002: 5). This perspective is shared in Uganda with an increased focus on increasing women's access to the financial sector as a way to increase incomes and alleviate poverty (Ellis et al., 2005; Lowicki-Zucca et al., 2014). In Northern Uganda, community-based organisations (such as the peace groups included in this study) were deliberately funded due to their connections with poor households in order to alleviate poverty amongst the most vulnerable. By the time CARE International established VLSAs across Uganda, women who founded peace groups interviewed in this study were already materially supporting displaced people albeit in a limited capacity and they were encouraging people to sell produce in and around the camps. According to Dolan (2009), it was common for women to sell vegetables, grains and fruits that were grown within the vicinity of the camp or harvested from their home areas (Dolan 2009: 116-117).

At the time of this study, KIWEPI and KICWA actually implemented VLSA schemes as part of their core partnership with CARE International. Staff members referred to guidelines provided by CARE International that are also contained in a training manual developed by the latter. CARE International trained KIWEPI and KICWA staff to follow a certain process for establishing the schemes. It would be initiated by a staff member (often referred to as a field officer) who would carry out a community assessment to identify vulnerable households. This was done with a set of questionnaires (designed by CARE International) that assessed household size, income, and the impact of war on alternative livelihood options. Parents of households that were found to have children who were defined as being "vulnerable" (by virtue of having inadequate nutrition, health and education options) were invited to attend a meeting that involved the surrounding community, including clan leaders, councillors and other community leaders. The purpose was to garner community support for the establishment of the scheme. Once the households had been enrolled, they were put into groups of between 15 and 25 members. The group was then trained in basic financial skills such as record keeping, managing of the cash that is kept in a cash box and administration of the group, including skills

to deal with conflict in the group. The group was then encouraged to become independent after eight months to a year.

Built into the loan scheme was 'a welfare fund', which was an amount put aside to assist members who were in distress. This fund was mandatory in the first cycle, but optional in future cycles. I found that funds were usually used to assist members pay for health care and school fees. No interest was accrued on amounts borrowed as part of the welfare fund. The wide adoption of VLSAs by peace groups included in this study indicates that there was a period during which there was a conscious shift towards more structured loan schemes. The women who founded these peace groups were not living in camps for displaced people, so they did not benefit from handouts given by international agencies or government.

According to Finnström (2008: 151) those who were displaced but did not reside in camps "…were not included in many relief programmes, while the Ugandan army, for its part, often treated people who refused or otherwise tried to dodge encampment as rebel suspects". Thus, these women who founded community-based groups had to find other means of supporting displaced people (mostly women and children) who slept on their doorsteps and sought shelter in and around their houses. They went about setting up their own income generation activities.

> *And so that was our area of interest to ensure that the women are empowered economically and so we got some funds to establish for what we called poultry units and we trained them about battery... and we trained them in wine making and we trained them in other income making activities that can actually help them maybe promote this kind of activity and so that they can sell and fend for their families* (Key Informant S, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Research on international development agencies indicates that women's participation in micro-credit is "…not only an economic payoff in increased access to financial service, but also an empowerment pay off in the new forms of bridging and linking social capital that emerge from participation in networks to borrower groups" (Servon, in Rankin, 2002: 12).

Among economists in particular, micro-financing for small enterprises has been considered as something of a "magic bullet" that could correct state and market failure. The state has to play the leading role in development. The premise for this misplaced faith is fundamentally rooted in liberal rational choice theory. This theory presupposes that the development process is driven

foremost by the decisions of equally endowed, self-maximising individuals subscribing to principles of economic rationality (Rankin, 2002: 4). The main features of liberal rational choice theory entails an emphasis on individualism where there is an assumption that people make autonomous decisions that are separate from the social conditions in which they live. Rationality is assumed to mean always making decisions that maximise profit for oneself and that these decisions ultimately contribute to growth and progress at the macroeconomic level. This assumes a worldview that has “a mechanistic and determinist epistemology rooted in methodological individualism…” (Agenjo-Calderón & Gàlvez-Muñoz, 2019). Furthermore, this conceptualisation of the inherent success of micro-finance projects is linked to an almost blind faith in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as the most appropriate institutions to promote development.

This developmental approach to microfinance is more suited for contexts where there has been protracted social conflict, where people are not ‘equally endowed “nor able to be fully ‘self-maximising’ without much assistance given to them. For example, Finnström (2008: 133) reports that in contexts such as Northern Uganda, where violence enters the most private spheres of everyday life, cultural and social agency diminishes. Displaced people comprised more than 90 per cent of the Acholi and an estimated one thousand people died every week in the camps.

It is therefore not surprising that the economic resources of women who founded these peace groups were rather limited despite the fact that they had good jobs and held various positions of status in the community. Another factor that further exacerbated the dire socio-economic situation in Northern Uganda was a rather delayed and inadequate presence of international agencies who could have provided humanitarian aid. As Dolan (2009:109) states:

> For a long time though, despite attempts by Ugandans to draw attention to the situation, the international community was silent. While the Aboke abductions gained global attention and condemnation and became synonymous with LRA brutality, the extreme deprivation and multiple forms of violence inherent in the camps, and the mass social dysfunction which they generated, drew remarkably little international reaction. Even when it eventually did, such as in a 2002 report by UNOCHA, direct criticism of rights abuses by the Government were avoided, and the villages were instead imagined as opportunities for the Government to consolidate its international image.

Feminist economists argue that we ought to perceive the economy primarily as a means for social provisioning, and not individual capitalist profiteering. The overall well-being of economic actors ought to be our concern in planning response strategies (Astrid Agenjo-Calderón, 2019). It demands new concepts of economics that place people's daily lives and their overall well-being at the centre. It offers an ethical-political framework for social transformation that seeks to construct economies based on equality and justice (Astrid Agenjo-Calderón, 2019:139).

It is clear that what these women's community-based peace groups attempted was more aligned with feminist economic principles than liberal rational choice theory because the primary purpose of the VLSA schemes they established was to meet people's basic needs for food, clothing and shelter, so as to create some kind of communal social safety net that afforded basic security and some peace of mind to continue planning for the future:

> *… at least when a person is economically stable she is able to do many things… and that gives us a peace of mind. You are not worried about what to eat tomorrow, what to wear and what to do, you are settled. And then other individuals, some other people need to be able to have peace of mind to be able to think positively, because if I am not sure of what I am doing the next minute or what would happen the next minute to me then why should I go ahead and plan for that? That also interferes with what one is able to do* (Key Informant J, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Wakako's (2003) study on informal microfinance groups in Uganda found that such groups (as also practised by these community-based peace groups) are the most important sources of promoting women's financial empowerment in rural households. Her study found that the benefits of being involved in these microfinance initiatives also carried over to influencing other socio-cultural spheres. For example, participation in informal finance groups increases women's decision-making power over non-traditional matters such as household income control, but not over women's traditional issues such as agricultural production. On the other hand, rural men's financial empowerment is more associated with their use of informal loans from individuals, for example friends, relatives or merchants. For women, individual-level factors such as occupation (farming, trading), and household level factors, notably household headship, have a profound influence on women's empowerment in both traditional and non-

traditional[20] spheres of decision-making. In contrast, rural men's empowerment is mainly associated with their gender rather than with household level conditions. Wakako (2003) recognized the limits of the transformative capacities of microfinance groupings, especially of the more formal sources of credit, and showed that financial empowerment does not necessarily lead to a transformation in gender relationships. Wakako concludes by advocating for an integrated approach to microfinance delivery in Uganda, since the integrated informal sources offer the best opportunities for rural farmers in general and women in particular.

In this study however, it became clear that once women's basic needs were met, the peace groups were able to shift their focus to empowerment and health related issues.

> *In those days we also initiated some income generating activities we trained women on making bread, making wine, wine from the local resources available at home and then training in tailoring…. and some aspects of life skills that can sustain them and mushroom growing, those things they can do at home within their compound. As people went back home from the camps we changed our vision…, we were looking at the development aspect, women out there should be empowered because we were working directly with the women affected by the war… there's the aspect of human rights, training on gender-based violence which affects women. Ja, and then there is also a component of reproductive health* (Key Informant W, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Thus, the women found various ways of earning money to provide for basic needs, for themselves, their extended family and their immediate communities. Their reliance on small scale income generation projects, local trade, and micro-credit schemes fall within a version of the economy that Peterson (2008: 9) describes as typical of women's groups in war contexts – a coping economy. As conflict conditions undermined social stability, eroded the formal economy, and disrupted traditional livelihoods, people sought economic options that served individual and household survival needs. Collective economic activities tended to include individuals, families and households, kin networks, neighbourhood communities, or social solidarity groups (Peterson, 2008: 9). This aligned with Peterson's notion of 'coping economy' because women took on the responsibility for sustaining families, households, kinship

[20] By traditional I mean more normative ways of enacting power that are expected of women in their communities. By non-traditional, I mean non-normative ways of enacting power that are expected of women in their communities.

networks, and even neighbourhoods. Figure 7 summarises the various ways that they developed such a 'coping economy' despite meagre economic resources to do this.

Figure 7: Women's micro-economies of survival – A coping economy

Figure 7 shows the following ways women's community-based peace groups in this study leveraged economic resources:

1. Setting up small income generation projects by using local resources and their own labour.
2. Setting up micro-finance/credit schemes such as village loan and savings schemes that they implemented in collaboration with international development institutions.
3. Demanding changes in women's authority over land so as to allow them to access or inherit land from their fathers' paternal lineage or their deceased husbands' patrilineage.
4. Demanding reparations in the form of citizenship and other means of sustainable livelihoods for children born in captivity from government-led post-conflict processes.

The last approach was particular to the peace group called WAN whose main activities involved putting political pressure on government-led post-conflict reconstruction processes to provide for their members' material needs. WAN demanded that children born in captivity be issued with identity documents without requiring information and consent from the child(ren)'s fathers. This is contrary to local council and home affairs procedures that require details of a child's father to issue an identity document.

As discussed in Chapter 5.4, I found that a women's legal centre in Gulu (FIDA) received many cases in which women could not get identity documents for the children they bore in captivity because they did not know the name of the father of the child(ren). This meant that they could not easily benefit from government facilities such as amnesty for returnees, health facilities and schools that required the use of identity documents to access services. WAN's demands on the government to allow identity documents to be issued thus challenged patriarchal norms of citizenship (that required paternity to be established) in order to access material support in the form of health and educational facilities that were part of government's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) that was in place when WAN began its advocacy work. WAN also trained the women to understand transitional justice processes so that they could lobby the government to provide reparations that responded to their need for alternative livelihoods and integration back into the community. This meant that they were active in taking part in national government debates about amnesty and reparations in parliament and the public arena – a political space that tended to be dominated by men.

Of these four approaches, acquiring land for women remains the most difficult one to implement. Women still battle for authority to access land, especially those who made claims on their (late) husbands', or children's patrilineage. This was especially difficult for women who had children who were born during captivity and were not able to easily integrate back into the child(ren)'s father's patrilineage. Daughters who returned to their paternal clan made claims to inherit land from their fathers. Widows or divorcees made similar claims on their paternal clan rather than live amongst their in-laws. For example, in a community mediation in Kitgum town, a widow who continued to stay with her late husband's clan laid a claim on her brother-in-law's responsibility to take care of her. These claims exceeded typical expectations of being treated as an 'inherited wife' who was to be taken care of like his other wives. Rather than receive material handouts in the form of food and money to support her children, she made claims to ownership and use of land and cattle that was left by her deceased husband.

Amina Mama's (2014:37-8) question about the nature of war economies as particularly oppressive and precarious is worth considering here. "Can ordinary women living in such contexts move beyond mere survival in societies that remain impoverished and precariously located in the global economy?" In the case of Northern Uganda, can income generation activities, microfinance schemes and claims on land address structural problems? For example, when it came to women's access to and ownership of land, despite women's community-based peace groups' efforts to raise their own income and challenge patrilineal inheritance systems, informants lamented that most women still did not own land in Northern Uganda:

> *…as women if you leave home to go to… you don't have your share of land at home, you are expected to have a share at your husbands' place, now you can access the land but you don't have any ownership over that land and then as soon as your husband dies it's either your children who can take over that land but not you, you can go and then the children have that land. Now while the children grow somebody maybe an uncle of the children, a brother-in-law is always in control of that land…*(Key Informant W, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

This finding is similar to that of Apio's (2016: 182) research on the politics of kinship and marriage amongst children born during the war in Northern Uganda. She found that men in the LRA also resisted integrating their 'war-wives' into their lineages upon return because they did not want any harm from an non-lineage member who could attract kwor (blood feud) if she married without following Lango rules. For this reason, many women who were (forcibly) married to men in militia groups (without following Lango rules on marriage), preferred to drop their status as (forced) wives of members of militia groups. They preferred to revert to the status they had before the war - as daughters and sisters in their fathers' patrilineage. Hence, these women tended to be reintegrated in their natal villages and not into their husbands' families (Apio, 2016: 182). There were thus many 'fatherless' children who were unable to claim ancestral allegiance from their paternal clan. With limited knowledge of or highly contested contact with their biological father's lineage, these children often ended up living with their mother's paternal clan. This resulted in a reconfiguring of patrilineages where daughters returned to their paternal clan and claimed material, social and spiritual integration that put demands on their fathers and older brothers' land and cattle. During the fieldwork in Kitgum, similar claims were made by widows or divorcees who preferred to return to their paternal clan rather than live amongst their in-laws. These claims were met with huge resistance from immediate and extended family members.

These intra-household and intra-clan tensions of land resonate with Lautze's (2008) study on the "Social dynamics in militarised livelihood systems: evidence from a study of Ugandan army soldiers" who found that heads of households are not necessarily benevolent (as is often assumed by humanitarian organisations). Rather, household heads could be sources of conflict and compound tensions, leading to a loss of access to resources for the most vulnerable. Lautze (2008) argues that it is important to study households not only as units of analysis but also as units to be analysed and that this is especially important in militarised contexts where violence is intertwined with livelihood with the possibility of extreme inter- and intra-household discrimination. It appears these peace groups were aware of the complexities of intra-household tensions in militarised contexts and engaged in intricate negotiations within and between families to address them.

All these different attempts at creating material well-being seemed to inadvertently contest militarised patriarchal clan systems and households. For example, by generating income through small businesses and micro-finance, some women took on a provider role that was previously expected of husbands and male clan elders. By harnessing collective material resources within and beyond the extended family, others took on a provider role beyond the expected feminine roles within the extended family. Finally, by demanding access to or ownership of land (and cattle in one instance) from fathers, brothers and brothers-in-law they challenged patriarchal inheritance systems.

6.7. Peace as psychosocial and bodily healing

This section explores psychosocial aspects of the activities that the women's peace groups undertook and compares how their community efforts resonate with existing theories of trauma and community healing. The study did not single out psychosocial well-being in its questions to research participants, but it emerged from participants' explanations of peace. When asked what peace meant to them, all referred to healing from the trauma of the war that had impacted them personally. They all expressed that the most memorable part of their peacebuilding activities were the times when they shared their stories of pain and suffering with other women in a supportive atmosphere. One participant shared that she was especially thankful for the times when she and other women learnt how to sew together because as they sewed and talked about their experiences of the war, they were able to shift their focus away from the trauma of

the past. She remembered how she and other women would sometimes sit in silence and focus on the act of sewing:

> *Because she will not have time to think. She will not...because we say you take a measurement from here up to here, she will focus on sewing… from here up to here …so she will put her mind here not minding what had happened (in the war)* (Key Informant A, KIWEPI).

Other participants referred to the way these collective spaces created 'peace of mind' and a 'peaceful environment'.

> *…really having an environment, a situation where you really don't have so much of mental problems and you're able to sleep when you go to bed because you are not thinking about this, about that. That is really to me I look at as peace and I think that is the sort of perception we want to have as women…* (Key Informant K, founder and conflict resolution practitioner, 24 December 2014).

> *It's [peace] not only running away from home and it's not only hearing guns. It is having that calm environment that calm atmosphere where you can explore your productive capacities and be able to do what you plan to do, you can put a plan for three years and be able to execute your plan…* (Key Informant J, Founder, WOPI-U, 15 December 2014).

These findings resonate with research conducted by Bragin et al., (2014) that measured psychosocial well-being in Northern Uganda by conducting 652 interviews with people (mostly women) in 23 sub counties in Acholi sub-region. Districts that were selected were the ones that were considered hardest hit by the armed conflict with abduction rates of 47percent and a 100 percent displacement rate. These districts all had NGO interventions focusing on women's empowerment funded by CARE International. This same programme was being implemented by KIWEPI at the time of my own fieldwork in Kitgum. Bragin et al., (2014) explored how to define, operationalise, and measure psychological and social well-being. They examined the conditions women in Acholi sub-region felt were necessary for their psychosocial well-being. The study explored further questions that could be added to future assessments of psychosocial programmes designed to benefit women in conflict-affected areas in this sub-region. These researchers found that psychosocial well-being included a range of socio-economic factors that stretched beyond current notions dominant in psychology that centre individual social circumstances and histories of mental health. Women in Acholi defined well-

being in terms of access to resources; religion and spirituality; raising children well; women's associations (saving schemes, groupings in clans, church and other community associations); good home and marriage; participation and advocacy; being able to help others; the garden; dressing well, looking good; time to rest and relax.

Bragin et al., (2014) found that access to resources ranked more important in Gulu's large peri-urban population, while "a good home and marriage" ranked higher in rural areas like Lamwo/Kitgum, the region most heavily affected by the war. In one of the most remote areas of their study (Agago), "membership in associations" often described as friendship and support outside the family was ranked high, with "access to resources" close behind (Bragin et al., 2014: 358). The authors of this study used Mary Ainsworth's (1967) attachment theory to make sense of the heavy focus on human connection (expressed in material terms) as central to women's sense of psychosocial well-being (for women in the Acholi sub-region). Human connection was also expressed in terms of a transcendent set of beliefs rooted in Acholi spiritual practices that centre collective connectedness in the material and immaterial realms. This resonated with responses from research participants in this study. There was frequent reference to collective connectedness as a form of healing. All peace groups involved in this study used group methods to facilitate healing:

> *…after the research we started to have storytelling with the women groups, sharing memories of the war together and so that is how the journey started, sharing memories together and as we continued sharing memories for two years they became empowered...Because we believe that it's important for someone to speak and it's also part of empowerment and it's also part of justice…, your participation keeps building your esteem...*(Key Informant N, staff and founder, WAN, December 2013).

The women in this group comprised those who had been abducted during the war and had come back with children who were born in captivity. As part of a research project undertaken by the Justice and Reconciliation Project, this group of women met regularly, sharing their experiences during the war so that their needs could be addressed in government's commitments for justice and reconciliation. JRP's focus was primarily that of seeking compensation especially for those women who had been abducted and bore children during their time in captivity. The research process used group storytelling as a method for collecting data.

> It is July, a wet season in Acholi land. Even as the rain threatens to drop twenty women are seated under a tree sharing their stories. They say this helps them to heal and move on with their lives. Some of the women have postponed going to the garden this morning to first tell their stories. We listen like children listening to old grandmother's scary tale at *wang-oo*[21]in the night. Unlike our childhood stories, these ones are astounding. They are stories you would not wish to be true or to have happened to people (Apiyo, 2013: 1).

They believed that they had to be strong to tell their stories to themselves and then to society so that other people could understand what they had been through. No-one was pushed to speak. The groups let each person speak when they were moved to do so, and different people at different times took the lead in the conversation (Apiyo: 2013:12). The women had a rhythm of peer support that enabled them to feel emotionally acknowledged, supported and taken care of. They told these stories while making dolls and beaded jewellery that they later sold to earn a small income to cover basic needs.

Similar confidence in storytelling as a way of healing and empowerment were shared by founders and staff of the other peace groups. Live Again initially began with one-on-one counselling approaches, but later found that a group approach was more appropriate:

> *Our focus for Live Again was mainly really in the beginning about trauma healing... And then the number of people who were traumatized was overwhelming and we realised that there was no way that we were going to succeed on that one-on-one, and so we got into that group therapy. You get the women together, train them and she had a model, simple, very simple, 'the cat and the rat' and we would talk to the women in that and there would be some techniques of breathe in, breathe out* (Key Informant T, founder, Live Again, February 2015).

The significance of (re)telling experiences of trauma amongst others who have experienced something similar has been researched by Herman (1992: 3) who contends that the there are three fundamental stages of recovery from trauma: "…establishing safety; reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community". The processes of storytelling that the women's peace groups used created an environment of physical and emotional safety that allowed them to reconstruct what had happened to each of

[21] An Acholi culture where people sit around the fire and tell stories

them during the war. Additionally, the long term engagement with each other through village saving schemes, income generation activities, skills training workshops, and collective efforts to reunite them with lost children and extended family members enabled them to bond with each other and to forge ties with broader communities in which they lived.

These group storytelling processes helped them speak about things that they had not spoken about before, especially forms of gender-based violence in their homes during and after the war.

> *Women have suffered in silence for so long by the culture that you are not supposed to talk out, you don't have to report it..., you don't ... even if we are in this house as husband and wife I am slapped here and then you knock at the door, then I have to reorganise my face and go out with a smile, that was also a contributing factor because they allowed themselves to be battered and misused and they were silent over it, they would not talk freely. And now in the course of this as we shared with them some of them now started opening up* (Key Informant J, Founder, WOPI-U, December 2014).

Trust had to be built over time especially for those who recently returned from the 'bush'. Once women began to open up, those who had not yet spoken were inspired to share. The cycle of storytelling had a therapeutic effect because they felt less isolated. They realised that they were not the only ones who had experienced particular kinds of pain and suffering.

> *Then another tremendous thing about the experience of sharing, it made me, it made me think that if these people keep telling their stories they will forget. Time will come when they will see that it's normal. Because, as they talk about their experiences, you find that someone has a worst experience than yours. Then you say eh...why am I worried about this when there are other people who are even worse. That element of shared experience is also so good, that is what I have seen has worked...*(Key Informant E, staff, WOPI-U, December 2013).

Some women shared stories of being recipients of food and money that their husbands or sons brought home after fighting and looting other communities. They lamented about how they kept this information to themselves. This caused much trauma and guilt about their indirect involvement in the war.

> *I have heard of cases where it is somebody's son who is in the rebel group and once they attack that village … that boy is coming home and when he comes home he drops money at home.. They don't say anything about it. You see structures coming up, you see life changing, but you don't know where the resources are coming from and we were there as women as mothers, as wives, we see things happening but we don't say anything about it. So in that way we also contributed to fuelling the wars* (Key Informant J, founder member, 15 December 2014, WOPI-U).

The group storytelling sessions offered a platform to share these stories in a safe environment where they felt they would not be blamed. The women who convened and hosted these sessions took on an advisory role that was usually assigned to village elders. The group storytelling process emulated a local communal practice commonly known as *wang–oo* – a form of story-telling that would occur in the evenings around the fire with the elders leading it. P'Bitek, a well-read Ugandan poet and writer of Acholi customs describes how *wang-oo* is practised:

> Towards sunset, as the day's work is over, you can see, moving along narrow pathways, in single file, groups of men and boys, carrying logs or branches of wood, as well as their hoes. You can also hear the flutes of the herd-boys bringing the cattle home. The women and girls have returned home from the gardens much earlier to prepare the evening meal and to do other domestic chores. On arrival, the younger boys take turns to make the outdoor fire "Mac wang Oo", whilst the older men have their hot baths. Soon, all those not otherwise engaged, come and sit around the fire, waiting for supper. The stage is set for talking folk tales (p'Bitek, 1962: 21).

One of the founders of WAN compared the group storytelling sessions they held to that of *wang-oo*. She referred to how members of WAN (who all had once lived in captivity) would listen to each other (Apiyo, 2013: 1). These *wang-oo's* were different from that which was typical in communities in the past. They did not include the wider extended family from young boys and girls, to elders like fathers, mothers, uncles, aunties, or grandparents. These storytelling sessions instead included only women who were directly affected by the war – mostly those who once lived in captivity or had been displaced during the war and sought refuge in towns. There were no elders who told stories that addressed problems of power and authority, the relationship between the chief and his subjects, or between family, or addressed problems of cooperation, and friendship that included advice on good personal qualities (p'Bitek, 1962: 24 in Apiyo, 2013).

Given the fragmentation of families as a result of abduction, displacement and mass violence, the possibility for *wang-oo* to take place in its traditional way was unlikely. This was especially the case when people lived in overcrowded camps, and where people were under constant fear of LRA attacks and UPDF-imposed curfews. *Wang-oo* was therefore rarely practised in the way it had been before the war. In a way, the peace groups filled this gap. Their storytelling sessions offered safe spaces for exchange where there was an emphasis on understanding collective experiences of the war, such as abduction, looting of food and cattle, changes in families due to displacement, and different forms of violence that occurred, especially sexual and gender-based violence. Through listening to each other's stories, these women 'made sense' of the war and its effects on their lives. Once they had built bonds of trust with each other, they felt like they had the courage to share their experiences with people who lived around them so that they could gain assistance with how to move forward with their lives and how to deal with the problems of reintegration into their communities. The conversations they held focused on different ways they could assist in creating peace within their immediate environments. This helped them shift a sense of helplessness and despair into a sense of possibility in which their own agency was centred.

These activities further strengthened their collective identity as women who were doing their best to build peace in their own lives and in the lives of the broader community in their districts. By convening and facilitating regular storytelling sessions they took on social roles that were ordinarily expected of clan elders. It appeared that this adaptation of *wang-oo* broadened their feminine social role as carers of their families and the communities in which they lived. They were able to find solace through telling their own stories, collectively 'make sense' of what happened to them, and (re)connect with members of their families and other close social networks. For women who were displaced or had returned from captivity, these social bonds were integral for de-stigmatisation and (re)integration.

It is worth noting that all these community efforts to heal were made without assistance from psychiatrists or psychologists (especially during the first few years of establishing their peace groups). The establishment of the groups and the processes of group storytelling were not preceded by a diagnosis of post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or any other psychiatric disorder. There were no processes of assessment based on any form of recognised criteria for establishing the state of a persons' mental health. They relied on their own attempts to recognise

and address what Burstow (2003: 1311) calls group trauma, community trauma, and historical trauma. Burstow (2003) points out that this approach has been found to be appropriate for contexts where there has been on-going violence, since trauma related to disconnection from the community is addressed by a combination of collective activities (including community interaction) that relies on people witnessing each other's healing. In addition, it enables survivors to learn more about the broader context of violence and discern some of the structural roots of historical trauma. This 'sense-making' process is also an integral part of collective healing.

Burstow (1992), Herman (1981) and Russell (1984) argue that individualised psychiatric diagnoses of trauma can be problematic. There may be an over reliance on symptoms, divorced from the complexities of people's lives and the social structures that give rise to them. Oppressive social systems, institutions and structural arrangements can allow trauma to occur, unnoticed and unnamed over long periods of time. Thus, in a way, the absence of professional counsellors meant that the peace groups inadvertently avoided a heavy reliance on diagnoses that individualise social problems and further pathologise traumatised people. This approach to dealing with conflict situations is not unusual and points to the centrality of "…a 'bottom-up' approach that recognizes the capacity of people to make a difference and challenges oppressive structural arrangements" (O'Brien, 2007).

The peace groups in this research situated the trauma within the war context and the micro-contexts that the women chose to reveal. The stories that were shared served as a springboard, generating a new sense of agency. They not only learnt practical social skills (e.g in conflict resolution, setting up and running a small business), but were able to build their own self-esteem and sense of worth.

> *I think one thing I like about them having the outreach in the community like you said it's a patriarchal society for women to stand and speak to their community... now seeing them you know speaking to their own communities and they are all composed and they are telling them and the communities hearing because the rate of stigma has reduced and children born in captivity are more accepted and I think that is at least good* (Key Informant N, staff and founder, WAN, December 2013).

WAN encouraged them to speak publicly about their experiences as women who were abducted during the war. They spoke on radio and to communities directly so that there was better

understanding of the atrocities that these women experienced with the hope that this would reduce stigmatisation against them.

> *And so together with our partners like FIDA we go to the community to sensitize the community on that and have radio talk shows where we talk about these issues on air like reparations, children born in captivity and reconciliation, stigma and things like that. And we have our focus campaigns like women's day and they go and do something and talk* (Key Informant N, staff and founder, WAN, December 2013).

Conversations with WOPI-U staff and community members in Barlonyo village also pointed to an emphasis on understanding what happened during the war as a form of addressing trauma. During group storytelling sessions, training workshops and other activities, WOPI-U learnt that over 500 people were killed in Barlonyo during the war. They were burnt in their homes during a curfew imposed by the government. Those who ran out of their houses were shot. The community explained that they wanted people's remains to be found so that people could be buried with respect and dignity. This has not happened for most of the deceased. Some members of the community believe that family members are haunted by 'troubled' spirits roaming around the area. In Barlonyo, the storytelling sessions convened by WOPI-U helped community members establish what actually happened during one of the most atrocious massacres that happened in Lira. Meeting and talking about the massacre encouraged them to make collective demands about what needed to happen for their communities to heal.

KICWA's approach to community healing was centred around children because they were set up primarily as a reception centre for formerly abducted children. When they began in August 1998, the founder members comprised ten community members who had no professional skills in working with children in need of trauma healing. They began by providing an environment for the children that replicated that of a typical home in Northern Uganda. This included building huts like those in the community and creating a daily routine of waking, eating, playing, learning, and sleeping. The female founders of KICWA functioned as social mothers to the children by providing food for them, playing with them, consoling them, and telling them stories around the fire in the evening.

> *They would take turns; they would work here during the day and then they would take turns spending the night here with the children to ensure that everything was going alright. It was important for them because we thought that when the children come back, they would have some kind of motherly figure and something close to their home*

> *setting and not just a pure institution, which was out of touch with the community. And so, we wanted to create a tight community setting and that's why we built huts and not some other type of structure. And also the activities there, they were close to those of the community* (Key Informant X, staff, KICWA, February 2015).

When the International Rescue Committee began to offer funding and technical support to KICWA the founder members gained formal skills in trauma healing and began to use them as a tool for understanding what the children went through. They would ask the children to draw pictures about what happened while they were in captivity.

> *Stories of the experiences they had in captivity, through the drawing. And what they would also want to do, they could even tell us through drawing. Because when we were together with the IRC (International Rescue Committee) they were actually giving us some trainings where we could help them open up and get them ready for reunification with their families. Because when they were doing that, we could tell that these children have actually gone through different stages and it would be difficult for them to adjust. At home, that was a different environment, in captivity that was a different environment, from the barracks again another one and when they come in the centre again a different environment, now when they are taken back home another different one. So four different environments* (Key Informant Y, founder, KICWA, February 2015).

Six of the women who founded KICWA worked as volunteers alongside professional staff and three were subsequently employed and took on more professional roles - two worked as nurses and one as a storekeeper. Over the years, as they received more funding from international development organisations such as WFP, AVSI, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UNICEF, some became more integrated into formalised professional ways of supporting the children.

> *Ok so they all received formal and informal training from within and they went ahead to tap from a lot of donors like, World Food programme and pretty soon it was World Food providing feeding to the returnee children. And it was also part of the package for re-integration and so when they went home, they went home with some foodstuff and we also had AVSI come on board as well, provide also transport to returnees when they were going back home. We had ICRC with non-food items, and we had UNICEF by then did not feature much but later on they came on strongly and worked directly with KICWA. So, I think putting this staff here helped a lot in this organisation tapping*

> *into other partners. And by then IRC started pulling out gradually* (Key Informant Z, Staff, KICWA, February 2015).

Apart from receiving some professional assistance and training, KICWA helped the children in undergoing cleansing ceremonies that were commonly held to heal communities. As Anyeko et al., (2011: 111 - 12) state:

> …some Acholi believe that ritual cleansings are critical to the process of appeasing the spirits of those killed badly during the war and preventing future misfortune to the clan. For this reason, some persons have refused to return to their villages where massacres or murders were committed during the war until they have been cleansed". A volunteer at KICWA and daughter of one of the founder members explained that she had taken part in assisting families undertake cleansing ceremonies so that the children who left KICWA could be properly accepted by their extended families and the broader community.

A staff member of KICWA share her experience of assisting communities hold these kinds of rituals:

> *And then we did a lot of community cultural rituals because it's a belief. For example for children who had nightmares and all that, they had a belief that if you perform a cultural ritual, the nightmares would go away. So we supported a lot of such functions in the community* (Key Informant U, KICWA, February 2015).

She explained that funds from international development organisations enabled KICWA to mediate between families and the children who had once lived at KICWA. She was part of a team of staff who mediated between the children and their families. This entailed several trips between KICWA and the surrounding villages. Sometimes it would take months before family members were willing and ready to accept the child and conduct a ceremony. According to Baines (2007: 111):

> …close to 20 percent of persons who have returned from captivity are quietly performing 'cleansing ceremonies' together with their clan. One of the most common and well-known rituals is *nyono tong gweno* (stepping on the egg), which is designed to welcome home those family members who have been away for an extended period of time.

For some returnees and their families, this ceremony was enough to promote reintegration and acceptance. In other cases, a more complex ceremony that was called *moyo kum* (the cleansing of the body) was performed. The ritual differs slightly in practice from clan to clan, but in general it calls for a gathering of elders to bless the returned person, wash away their ill deeds, chase away evil spirits and appeal to the ancestors for their blessing.

In some instances, KICWA would cover some of the costs of holding the ceremony – such as food and transport. So the peace groups augmented a weakened clan system's spiritual and social care role. These women's peace groups thus played a key role in trauma healing through various group methods, using storytelling and fostering a collective connectedness as a form of healing.

These findings indicate that despite weakened clan structures, KICWA, WOPI-U and KIWEPI sought out clan elders who knew relevant Acholi cultural practices. They encouraged them to carry out cleansing ceremonies for women and children who returned from captivity. It appeared that these peace groups did this because clan leders lived in extreme poverty and sometimes lacked the basic requirements to perform their duties. In addition, many clan elders had suffered trauma themselves, had turned to alcohol and had lost the respect of younger generations. Another reason they lost respect was because "…some assumed the position of cultural chief based on political connections to the government, not on heritage or community recognition" (Baines, 2007: 106).

Another layer of healing that some peace groups focused on was that which related to the traumatic effects of the absence of reproductive health care as well as the long-term effects of physical and sexual violence, especially rape. According to Liebling et al., (2008: 175):

> The main health problems faced by the women survivors of the conflict include gynaecological problems, HIV/AIDS, lack of access to safe motherhood services, lack of modern contraceptives and untreated ailments leading to infertility in a society where every woman values motherhood, resulting in a high burden of mental illnesses and trauma (Isis-WICCE, 2001b, 2006a; WHO, 2007).

Isis-WICCE (2001a, 2001b; 2002a, 2002b, 2006a, 2008) and Liebling et. al (2008) established that the trauma that women in Northern Uganda faced was partly due to absent reproductive health care and untreated gynaecological problems that were caused by the extreme levels of

sexual violence that occurred during and just after the war. In 2005, Isis-WICCE partnered with a team of health professions to screen and treat women who lived in IDP camps in Kitgum. They screened these women for reproductive health complications. At the time Kitgum district, including Mucwini, had a population of about 15,000. While Padibe had around 30,000 people. The medical team were able to screen 810 adults and 182 children with the aid of a medical questionnaire to identify gynaecological, surgical and mental health problems. Of those screened, more than a quarter reported being subjected to various forms of sexual torture. Almost twenty percent described violent penetrative sexual abuse including rape, gang rape and defilement. Fourteen point six percent suffered sexual abuse including incest, sexual slavery and forced marriages. Other women experienced sexual exploitation for survival or in exchange for gifts and food (Liebling et al., 2008).

WOPI-U and KIWEPI worked closely with Isis-WICCE in implementing these and subsequent medical interventions. Their staff thus gained insights into gynaecological health care and its relevance for enabling women's psychological well-being. Interviews with founders and staff of WOPI-U and KIWEPI (in 2013, 2014 and 2015) and beneficiaries of the medical interventions (focus group in Agweng village in February 2015), revealed the significance of these medical interventions. Two founders of WOPI-U described what they heard from women who had been treated. They said their 'abdomens were on fire' or that they 'leaked like a bottle':

> *…one of them whispered to me, "I am not at peace because I feel my abdomen, there is fire!" At first I did not understand but later on when I probed she told me that what she went through… she was gang raped and all sorts of things and as a result of it she had severe pain in the abdomen…that woman is not experiencing peace and that is what we look at…peace means that a woman's whole body should be healthy* (Key Informant S, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).
>
> *Because when we interacted with these ones that came from LRA camps they had unique diseases, some were gang raped, others tortured and… they had some complications. And they said, 'you are talking about peace when my private part is not mended I am not a woman. When I am still leaking like a bottle I have no peace'* (Key Informant K, founder, WOPI-U, December 2013).

These findings concurred with Liebling et al.,'s 2008 study that revealed that most women who attended the medical camps implemented by Isis-WICCE in Kitgum and Lira had:

> …chronic lower abdominal pain (48.9 percent), abnormal vaginal discharge (26.9 percent), abnormal vaginal bleeding (25.5 percent), swellings in the abdomen (20.9 percent) infertility (24.8 percent) and genital sores (23.4 percent). Other problems included abnormal leaking of urine and faeces, vaginal tears, unwanted pregnancies, and sexual dysfunction. Sexual torture and multiple sexual partners were major contributions to high levels of sexually transmitted infections and chronic pelvic pain (Liebling et al., 2008: 181).

Founders of WOPI-U and KIWEPI pointed out how important the medical interventions were for encouraging women to speak about their abdominal pain with medical practitioners who later operated on them.

> *At least they started opening up, talking about their health. Up to now, these people still, sometimes they call us. Like me when I go to the field, I receive cases and normally I refer them to the main hospital. But one good thing is that these people are now receiving medical aid from even elsewhere. Like the last time I went to Agweng I got a number of women who told me they went to some other organisation, then they were taken to Gulu, for screening… They were also treated, they are trying to seek now for services, but those days they were quiet…waiting for… WOPI(U) and Isis -WICCE, but now they are seeking even from other people* (Key Informant E, staff, WOPI-U, December 2013).

In a context where government health centres were poorly equipped with almost no gynaecological facilities or professional staff available, the two medical camps run by Isis-WICCE in collaboration with local women's peace groups were significant in providing much needed medical assistance to survivors of extreme sexual violence. The women's peace groups addressed the medical reproductive health care needs that were supposed to have been provided by government health centres or international development organisations that were present at the time. Even though only two of the six groups included in this study were involved in this form of reproductive and psychosocial health care, it points to an important gap in mainstream health interventions that some women's peace groups attempted to fill. A founder of PVP mentioned a shelter for women that also offered reproductive health services for women who had severe injuries from rape:

> *When you go to Lira and you find this shelter…for women who have been abused sexually, for those who need some medical support to deal with their fistula or whatever*

and she has even offered part of her compound for doing that because there was nothing (Key Informant K, Rosalba Oywa, founder, PVP, December 2013).

Once again this form of medical care reveals another way in which there was an expansion of women's feminine social roles of care because they took on the kind of care that would have ordinarily been given by traditional healers and hospitals.

6.8. Chapter summary

This chapter reported on four sets of findings relating to participants' conceptualisation of peace. These findings addressed objectives 1, 3, and 4 that sought to seek an understanding of women's perspectives of peacebuilding, their contribution to a feminist peacebuilding paradigm, and their insights into the challenges they faced as peace activists. The first set of findings are about peace activists' conceptualisation of peace as a version of human security and social harmony found in dominant literature on peacebuilding. The second set of findings refer to conceptualisations of peace in terms of Acholi and Langi customs about women and men's social roles within families and communities, and how these customs relate to women peace activists' understanding of gender equality. The third set of findings relate to a conceptualisation of peace that argues that patriarchy is a threat to peace. The fourth set of findings reveal women's peace activists initiatives in responding to a humanitarian crisis whilst also integrating their peacebuilding activities. In general, I found that women's peace groups gave primacy to addressing patriarchal violence in domestic spaces while simultaneously locating their conceptualisation of peace in the public domain of war and militarism.

In terms of their conceptualisation of peace as human security and social harmony, I found that they articulated peace by describing harmonious interpersonal relationships between people and the importance of having a sense of hope about the future. There was emphasis on the importance of creating peace that was much more than the absence of military fighting, rebel activity, or even sexual violence. These perspectives of peace were attuned to notions of human security expressed as material well-being gained via income generation activities, micro-credit schemes, and pushing for reparation from the government. Seeking reparation from the government was especially important because repatriation strategies instituted by Amnesty International primarily focused on boys and men who fought during the war while women who were part of militia groups were not catered for. Ideas about social harmony were embedded

in peacebuilding activities that involved psychosocial healing, integration of formerly abducted children into their families, and ritual practices that were central to creating various versions of social cohesion. Women peace activists in this study considered these activities central to demilitarisation and reintegration especially for women who were abducted during the war and who returned with children.

With regards to women's conceptual understanding of their role in bringing about peace, research participants highlighted initiatives set up (by women) to address social needs resulting from the war and that men seemed unable to respond to. They attributed this to women's natural ability to care and be supportive – both behavioural attributes considered to be integral to creating social cohesion. They linked this 'caring ability' as well as 'mediational authority' to Acholi and Langi beliefs about femininity that posit women as central to conciliation in the community. They referenced roles of elderly women who were respected as 'mothers' in the community, as well as women's political roles in the clan as chiefs. I note three examples they gave, namely the role of respected elderly women in convincing rebel leaders to put down arms; the role of founder members of peace groups who acted as social mothers to children who returned from the war with no parents; and the role of female chiefs (locally referred to as Rwot Okoro) who acted as mediators in disputes in the home, extended family and community, especially in disputes that involved women. Roles of motherhood and nurturer were not necessarily perceived as oppressive or burdensome, but noble and powerful in the sense that women were considered to be 'reliable' and 'trusted' people who could respond to immediate community needs. These qualities were linked to womanhood and as already being present in Acholi and Langi cultures. This finding challenged perceptions of women as mostly vulnerable in war contexts and opened up the study to an analysis of power that centred femininities of women who held intersections of social and political power in a situation of extreme precarity. The study exposed the formal and informal power that these women had and offered some insight into how they leveraged it to build peace in their communities. This entailed a gendered analysis of peace beyond typical framings of femininity often discussed in feminist theories of peace. The findings show that motherhood was but one intersection of femininity that augmented the way the founders of peace groups survived and resisted patriarchal militarised systems at community level.

Women who founded peace groups also offered an analysis of men's gender roles by arguing that patriarchy was a threat to peace. They explained that for peace to be possible they needed to change some patriarchal value systems that were dominant in Acholi and Langi customs.

Here patriarchy was understood in two ways - in terms of men's authority and violence in the home; and in terms of patrilineal inheritance systems. They challenged masculine power within the home and the community by pushing to change masculine social norms in homes and contesting patrilineal inheritance systems. They argued that the Acholi customs that gave husbands authority to undermine their wives and discipline them were a direct antithesis to peacebuilding. They also argued that men's abrogation of their responsibility as providers of the family destroyed peace in their homes. Thus, their peacebuilding activities sought to reinforce men's provider role as well as transform their authoritarian attitudes and violent behaviours. Their strategies for transforming men's behaviours included drawing men into village loan and saving schemes that they had initially set up for women; as well as establishing projects that focused on affirming men's social roles in the family and community. By including men in the village loan and saving schemes the peace activists were trying to hold men accountable to principles and practices of the schemes, which stressed their responsibilities with regards to taking care of the family and earning an income. Money was not to be wasted on anything that could harm the family's well-being and, in this way, excessive drinking habits were curtailed. Married men were introduced to the need for joint decision making with their wives in important family matters. Specific projects set up for men included strategies that publicly affirmed and socially rewarded men for being responsible husbands and community members who respected their wives, earned an income, provided for the family and assisted with chores in the household. So, in this way, women's peace groups attempted to change Acholi and Langi customs about men and masculinities. They sought to transform Acholi and Langi patriarchal customs to more egalitarian approaches that included collective decision-making, shared chores, mutual respect and more importantly embracing non-violence. Apart from articulating peacebuilding as a process that required changing patriarchal customs concerning men's social roles in the home as husbands, the women's community-based peace groups in this study went further and challenged patrilineal inheritance practices. This articulation of peace as a process that required shifts in patriarchy required a deliberate engagement with men and masculinities. They sought to move masculinities away from militarised violent versions of manhood towards what I refer to as a version of 'peaceful masculinities'.

Insights on what gender equality is and its conceptual links with peace revealed that there was an understanding that violence is embedded in gender identities and a recognition that peacebuilding entails a simultaneous effort to change militarised masculinities as well as ensure

that there is equality between genders within the home and broader society. They often pointed out that peace was much more complex than the ceasing of gun-violence (as articulated in the government-led formal peace process). They understood that the form of violence that they were facing was structurally bound within precariously reconstituted family structures and institutionalised militarisms enacted by the fighting forces of both government armies and militia groups. This was reflected in their peacebuilding activities that acknowledged economic, psychosocial and spiritual experiences of violence while also demanding changes in the government's post-conflict reconstruction processes (to acknowledge citizenship of 'fatherless' children and provide reparations for women returnees); and supporting clan elders (to conduct cleansing ceremonies and to allow women to inherit land). Activities such as group storytelling and cleansing ceremonies, for example, addressed psychosocial and spiritual aspects of violence that the war created, while income generation activities sought to offer alternative livelihoods that assisted in re-building the socio-economic fabric of families. These activities showed that they were conscious of iterative aspects of militarised violence that kept being reproduced even after the militarised violence ceased.

Lastly, research participants' conceptualisation of peace was partly influenced by international development agencies' discourse and practices. All the peace groups included in this study worked locally while partnering with international development programmes, some of which arrived in the area after the peace groups had already been founded. For example, income generation activities and group counselling processes that began prior to the advent of international development agencies later grew into larger, more formalised income generation projects and community trauma-healing processes that were funded by international development agencies. These included widely practiced micro credit schemes and community demilitarisation and reintegration projects that were funded by CARE International, IRC, AVISI and USAID, amongst others. Therefore, the women's peace groups' ideas about building peace not only drew on their own local knowledges but were also informed by ideas emanating from the international development programmes. For example, development aid practices that addressed collective trauma were used in tandem with local cleansing rituals (to ease the return of formerly abducted women and children). This required sensitive communication strategies and dispute resolution sessions among families, clan leaders, and development agencies. In addition, funding for women's empowerment programmes had also partly shaped the language used by these peace groups to facilitate access to much needed resources. For example, UN Women funded a number of activities that were informed by

international commitments to UNSCR 1325 on women peace and security. These projects included responding to sexual and gender-based violence through aiding survivors access to local justice processes as well as projects that aimed at engaging with men as important ‘partners’ in women’s empowerment programmes.

The following chapter presents this thesis’ main conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - AN AFRICAN FEMINIST PEACEBUIDING THEORY

7.1. Introduction

The main conclusions are based on key findings discussed in Chapter 5 which have been subsumed under the theme of gender flux, war and peacebuilding and the key findings discussed in Chapter 6 which have been subsumed under the theme of theorising peacebuilding from women activists' perspective. Furthermore, this chapter concludes with a discussion on 'An African Feminist Peacebuilding Theory' which brings the thesis full circle with regards to its initial research endeavour. Finally, some recommendations are suggested.

This study established that women peace activists had a conceptualisation of a complex state of 'un-peace' in Northern Uganda that saw militarised violence operating in tandem with rebel activities, abductions, looting and killings that occurred during and after the introduction of government-led post conflict reconstruction programmes. This included a recognition of shifts in gender relations that occurred within family and clan systems. . Furthermore, this study established that despite this 'fractured context' some women were still able to exercise social and political leverage that contributed to fostering peace in Northern Uganda.

Within the general theme which I have titled 'gender flux, war and peacebuilding', there were three main sets of findings from which certain conclusions could be drawn. These are:

- Women's assessment of the effect of war on men and masculinities;
- The effects of the war on women and shifts in families;
- Women's agentic responses to a humanitarian crisis.

7.2. Women's assessment of the effect of war on men and masculinities

The study discovered that many women who founded the community peace groups experienced men who were displaced by the war as having been 'emasculated' by the war situation.

This finding concurs with previous research that has addressed this apparent crisis in masculinities This research speaks to the changing position of men in society has left men feeling disempowered and violent and that this is partly because they are unable to fulfil societal expectations of providing for and protecting their families (Freedman & Jacobson, 2012; Kimmel, 2018; Morrell & Swart, 2005; Ratele, 2016; Silberschmidt, 2005). Due to rapid social, economic and political change, many aspects of traditional, or normative masculinities have been rendered increasingly dysfunctional or obsolete. In Northern Uganda, this study established that the war led to a period of destabilisation in traditional gender roles and relationships, creating a contemporary 'crisis of masculinity' that is related to the forms of militarism that occurred. This crisis is also exacerbated by an increase in women's power through women's empowerment programmes. Thus, one may conclude that social disruption occurred at two levels in Northern Uganda. The first had to do with the loss of cattle, land and being unable to protect their families from violence, including sexual violence against their wives, mothers and daughters. The second had to do with women's ability and willingness to cope with the effects of the war as well as an increase in women's empowerment programmes that proliferated when larger aid agencies came on the scene. This conclusion resonates with Branch's (2011) research found that Acholi men tended to blame the government and foreign NGOs for promoting a desire among women (who lived in camps for internally displaced people) for more authority than they had held in the village. Branch (2011: 141) also found that many men treated the issue of women's rights with undisguised disdain. Alongside Branch's research, it can be concluded that burgeoning humanitarian efforts in Northern Uganda thus contributed towards an empowerment of women that contested Acholi and Langi norms about masculinity and this exacerbated a feeling of demoralisation and irrelevance amongst men.

This study deduced that particular forms of militarised violence against men in Northern Uganda may have destabilised what Bourdieu (2001:66) calls habitus - a social world constructed around an androcentric worldview in which the masculine unconscious "…constitutes women as symbolic objects whose being (*esse*) is being-perceived (*precipi*), and has the effect of keeping them in a permanent state of bodily insecurity, or more precisely, symbolic dependence". There was a destabilisation of masculine ways of doing and being that were once 'functional' within a social field premised on masculine hetero-norms around land, cattle and clan systems. Men's gendered social realities were disrupted in ways that occasioned changes in women's social reality within the domain of heterosexual family ties.

7.2.1. Effects of war on women and shifts in family

The study established that mass displacement and violence destabilised several traditional and cultural practices including gender norms relating to femininity amongst the Acholi and Langi communities. Some women who self-identified as peace activists founded community-based peace groups in order to cope with an a humanitarian crisis. This occurred in the face of an inadequate national and international response to mass violence and displacement in Northern Uganda. With lack of support from men who felt stripped of their masculine power, the study deduced that women who were displaced experienced an increase in their responsibilities within and beyond their fathers' or husbands' patrilineage and a broadening of their implicit areas of influence as mothers, aunts, older sisters, and sisters-in-law.

This conclusion concurs with other studies about displacement during the war in Northern Uganda (Baines 2007; 2017; Dolan 2009; Branch, 2011Finnström, 2008; Jagielski, 2012) that point to drastic consequences for local communities. By harnessing collective material resources within and beyond the extended family, I found that many women who were located in Kitgm, Gulu, and Lira took on a provider role beyond that which was expected of them in their own extended family. This study clearly outlines experiences of particular women in these towns, who reached out to those who fled from the war and violence that erupted in the rural areas of Northern Uganda. Apart from members of Women's Advocacy Network (WAN - that was founded by women ex-combatants in 2011), none of the key informants in this study were themselves displaced by the war. They did however witness the effects of violence and mass displacement that unfolded around them. This meant that they were less vulnerable than the people they assisted since the trauma they experienced was not as a result of direct violence but rather a 'secondary trauma' due to their assisting and listening to those who were directly brutalised. One may conclude from this study that these women peace activists' responses to the crisis were possible due to an existing social capital they possessed, as well as a profound sense of compassion and responsibility for displaced people, which they then used to address the dire need around them. They also deliberately sought to assist displaced women who found that they were unsupported by their husbands, fathers, and brothers.

The study revealed how these women who founded community-based peace groups spearheaded the beginnings of a 'coping economy'. Their initial focus on establishing small-scale income generation projects and micro-credit schemes falls within the notion of a 'coping

economy as described by Peterson (2008). Peterson found that as conflict conditions undermine social stability, erode the formal economy, and disrupt traditional livelihoods, people tend to seek alternative economic options that serve individual and household survival needs. Collective economic activities tend to include individuals, families, households, kin networks, neighbourhood communities, or social solidarity groups (Peterson, 2008: 9). This finding concurs with Samuel's (2012) research on women's peace activism in South and South Eastern Asia also revealed that one of the 'gendered risks' faced by women peace activists is that of the dislocation of everyday life and an increase in women's burden in the domain of care. Findings from other studies on women's experiences of war and post-conflict reconstruction in Liberia (Baker & Liebling, 2010; Fuest, 2008), South Sudan (Hashim, 2019), Sierra Leone (Mackenzie, 2009), and Columbia (Lopez & Holstine, 2019) similarly refer to how women supported families and took on expanded caregiving roles. In Colombia, as was found in Northern Uganda, women responded quickly to the needs of people displaced from rural areas, while many men found it hard to cope (Lopez & Holstine, 2019).

Through the data collected from WAN – the one peace group founded by women who had been abducted during the war – the study corroborates previous research (Ocheri, 2011; Baines, 2017) about women ex-combatants' agency in their own re-construction of 'post-bush' life and livelihoods. This is yet another under-explored area of 'peace work'.

This study deduced that women's efforts to cope could also be interpreted using Foucault's conception of security as a performative function, a productive condition of possibility that happens at the level of the everyday, where there is power and knowledge in normalisation, which is a crucial part of the way in which society is 'defended'. Here one could interpret the word 'defended' to also mean the process through which pockets of survival and social cohesion are made possible for displaced people or survivors of war atrocities. Thus, one could conclude that women drew on norms of femininity to create a sense of security in a context of extreme vulnerability. Thus, for these women, peacebuilding entailed an expanded performance of normative (and in some cases, less normative) versions of femininity within and beyond the extended family. The study found that this created conditions for material agentic possibility at the level of the everyday where the inherent dangers and vicissitudes of keeping life going amidst a context of patriarchy, militarism and war.

7.2.2. Women's agentic response to a humanitarian crisis

The study established that founder members of five (all except founders of WAN) peace groups included in this study, had personal social and material resources that enabled them to provide assistance to people who had fled from fighting in remote areas. It was clear that their social capital was linked to the fact that many of them had attained formal education, were employed in the civil service, and had a large social network within (and beyond) their extended family that they could draw on. Their location in towns where displaced people found refuge meant that they could draw on their spheres of influence to collectively respond to needs of people who fled to Lira, Kitgum, and Gulu.

This conclusion offers alternative narratives about women's agency in Uganda's history of political upheaval that tends to depict men as key protagonists of change and (in)stability (Amone & Murra, 2014; Branch, 2011; Dolan, 2009; Karugire, 1980; Kutesa, 2006; Mutibwa, 2008; Ngoga, 1998; Sathyamurthy, 1986).

Furthermore, this conclusion contributes to existing literature on women's collective organising in Uganda, namely Tamale (1999), Tripp (2000, 2004) as well as Tripp and Kwesiga's (2002) research on women's movements as a political force.

My findings offer a different perspective to women's organising efforts in Northern Uganda. It centres women's agency and power in informal community change processes that sought to respond to a context of militarism and mass displacement. This study revealed formal and informal power that these women had and offered some insight into how they leveraged it to build peace in their communities. By undertaking a gendered analysis of peace beyond typical framings of femininity within feminist theories of peace (Baines, 2017; Barry 2005; Charlesworth, 2008; El Bushra, 2008; Moser & Clark, 2001; Pankhurst, 2003), I deduced that motherhood and feminine nurturer roles were but one intersection of femininity that augmented the way founders of peace groups survived and resisted patriarchal militarised systems at community level. These findings contribute another angle to Utas (2005)'s notion of 'tactical agency' of women in war zones – the idea that women navigate precarious social contexts of militarism and violence as they search for protection of self and family. Rather than focus on the tactical agency of women who took up arms (as did Utas), my research offered a complex understanding of the agentic behaviour of women peace activists' and their concomitant political subjectivities in Northern Uganda.

Furthermore, I established that women peace activists' agentic responses to a humanitarian crisis included challenging patriarchal norms. In the process of ensuring that displaced women and their children had livelihood options, these women got involved in land claim processes to lobby on behalf of displaced women who needed access to a piece of land in order to sustain their livelihoods.

7.3. Women activists' theorisation of peacebuilding

Within the general theme 'theorising peacebuilding from women activists' perspective' (Chapter 6) there were four sets of findings from which conclusions could be drawn. These are:

- Peace and human security / social harmony.
- Peace and Womanhood according to Acholi and Langi customs
- Peace and Patriarchy (seen as a threat to peace).
- Peace and Development Discourse.

7.3.1. Peace and human security and social harmony

In terms of their conceptualisation of peace as human security and social harmony, I concluded that the participants articulated peace by describing harmonious interpersonal relationships between people that centred the importance of having a sense of hope about the future. There was emphasis on the importance of creating peace that was much more than the absence of military fighting, rebel activity, or even sexual violence. Human security was linked to material well-being gained via income generation activities, micro-credit schemes, and pushing for reparation from the government. The latter was especially important because repatriation packages instituted by Amnesty International primarily focused on boys and men who fought during the war while women who were part of militia groups were not catered for.

This conceptualisation of peace resonates with Alkire's (2003:3) working definition of human security as that which seeks "… to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfilment.''

I found that peace groups in this study were unwittingly influenced by neo-liberal economic thinking while simultaneously challenging it. Their economic activities did not presuppose the existence of equally endowed, self-maximising individuals who subscribed to principles of

economic rationality (Rankin, 2002: 4). Rather they relied on principles of community solidarity and sharing. Due to the range of economic activities they initiated, women's community-based peace groups in this study increased displaced women's capacity to care for their families and deal with the crisis of displacement and complex layers of psychosocial trauma endured by themselves and the surrounding community. Women's involvement in income generation and micro-credit activities enhanced them both psychosocially and economically.

Women's community-based peace groups also put pressure on government-led post-conflict reconstruction processes to provide for their material needs. For example, WAN demanded that children born in captivity be issued identity documents without requiring information and consent from the child(ren)'s father. This is contrary to local council and home affairs procedures that require details of a child's father to issue an identity document. Thus, through this initiative they challenged patriarchal norms of citizenship (which required paternity to be established) in order to access material support.

It was clear that women peace activists centred a feminist reading of human security that includes safeguarding bodily and personal integrity alongside broader social, political and economic matters. This conceptualisation of human security was reflected in women peace activists' promotion of women's health issues related to rape and torture. In a context where government health facilities are poorly equipped with almost no gynaecological facilities or professional staff available, women peace activists recognition of the importance of the provision of short-term medical care meant that they were alert to women's human security during and after the war in Northern Uganda.

The study deduced that social harmony was understood as that which required psychosocial healing, integration of formerly abducted children into their families and ritual practices that were central to creating social cohesion. Such initiatives were considered central to demilitarisation and reintegration especially for women who were abducted during the war and who returned with children. As discussed in Chapter 6, a group healing approach was integral to assisting with women's ability to 'make sense' of the broader context of the war in Northern Uganda. Group storytelling sessions served as a form of group counselling where emotions and memories were sensitively dealt with. These groups became safe, accepting 'holding places' in a context of stigma and ostracization from the wider community who were not comfortable and were suspicious of the survivors' return from captivity.

It was clear that the women's groups in this study addressed spiritual aspects of community integration and this was not ordinarily expected of them as women of that age and position within their extended families. They made substantive efforts to createsocial harmony by supporting cleansing ceremonies as an integral part of assisting displaced persons with the reintegration into their families and communities upon return from captivity.

Despite weakened clan structures, women's peace groups actively searched for clan elders who knew relevant Acholi cultural practices. They encouraged them to carry out these cleansing ceremonies and also covered part of the costs involved (such as food and transport).

7.3.2 Peace and womanhood

With regards to women's conceptual understanding of their role in bringing about peace, women highlighted a wide range of initiatives set up (by women) to address the social needs resulting from the war and which men seemed unable to do. They attributed this to women's natural ability to care and be supportive and hence contributing in this way to social cohesion. They linked this 'caring ability' as well as 'mediational authority' to Acholi and Langi beliefs about femininity that posit women as central to conciliation in the community. They referenced the roles of elderly women who were respected as 'mothers' in the community, as well as women's political roles in the clan as chiefs. The nuanced way in which they negotiated the re-integration of children who were abducted relied on gendered perceptions of responsibility embedded in the clan system. This intersected with embodied and perceived ideas of motherhood, and other feminine roles within the extended family that gave a sense of common responsibility and community as women who could leverage material and social resources. Roles of motherhood and nurturer were not necessarily perceived as oppressive or burdensome, but noble and powerful in the sense that women were considered to be "reliable" and "trusted" people who could respond to immediate community needs. These qualities were explained as already being present in Acholi and Langi cultures about womanhood. Motherhood was but one intersection of femininity that augmented the way the founders of peace groups survived and resisted patriarchal militarised systems at community level.

This finding resonates with Tamale's description of Betty Bigombe's experience as a mediator in 1998. In the end, her position as a woman proved useful because she was often seen as non-threatening as a political leader.

> She defied the prejudices associated with womanhood while embracing its positive attributes; fought the discrimination of an institution that is traditionally male, and

successfully played the role of non-military negotiator – normally the preserve of commissioned military men or seasoned male actors (Oyewumi, 2016; Tamale, 1999: 50-1).

Cockburn's (2007) study of women peace activists in seven countries also found that motherhood was used as a powerful social position that served to unify women across racial, political, or class divides, build solidarity and effectively resist patriarchal systems. Some participants in her study argued that motherhood can be valued both from the perspective of patriarchal nationalism or feminist antimilitarism.

7.3.3. Peace and patriarchy

Women peace activists understood that the roots of violence in the community were partly embedded in norms about manhood that gave husbands authority to undermine and abuse their wives. To address this, they initiated projects that affirmed and valorised non-abusive masculinities. This finding concurs with Cockburn's (2010) and my earlier writing on gender, war and militarised masculinities (Clarke, 2008; 2013) that point to the importance of transforming histories of militarism that continue to (re)produce militarised patriarchal gender identities, before and after war. However, the peace groups attempts to reconfigure and 'rehabilitate masculinities' remained bound by lineage systems that presumed patriarchal masculine status as necessary for social stability. Their efforts to change masculinities were premised on re-inscribing men's heterosexual social status as responsible fathers and husbands who would only be respected by society if they shared decision-making and household chores with their wives. Thus, attempts to transform patriarchal norms were simultaneously constrained by an unconscious reproduction of patriarchal masculine norms that relied on a powerful (yet responsible) husband. Their efforts were like a 'relentless double' that precariously existed within and on the margins of heteronormative patriarchal family systems. These findings concure with research by Esuruku (2011) and Laliberté (2016) that interrogated the complex ways in which masculinities and femininities are intertwined and how 'post war' peacebuilding and development projects are unfolding in Northern Uganda. The findings especially tie in with Esuruku's (2011: 38) recommendation for more research into widowhood, diminished masculinities, and the precarious new position of women as breadwinners.

7.3.4. Peace and the development discourse

The study concluded that liberal discourses on 'rights' and 'gender equality' influenced the kinds of peace building activities that peace groups implemented. All the peace groups included in this study worked alongside these international development programmes, some of which arrived in the area after the peace groups had already been founded. Receiving funds from these aid organisations also meant collaborating with their development agenda which was framed in a neo-liberal, western-influence, rights-based development discourse. Widely practiced micro credit schemes and community demilitarisation and reintegration projects were soon funded by CARE International, IRC, AVISI and USAID, amongst others. Thus, the women's peace groups' ideas about building peace were partially influenced by ideas emanating from the international development programmes.

In some instances, such as the description of micro-credit, the terms used were derived from training manuals developed by CARE International under its SCORE programme. In fact, it was clear that staff were trained to use these terms and implemented the micro-credit schemes in accordance with international development organisation's programme documents. At times it was not easy to ascertain whether their interpretation of peace and development emanated from their own lived experiences, grounded in local realities or came from their engagement with the international development discourse. As Lewis (2005: 384) states:

> The effort to salvage past modes of thought, or to invent an entirely new language, seriously underplays the extent to which current language use, terminology and theory have become irrevocably creolised. This means that what we understand, from the vantage point of the present, to be pre-colonial and what we currently imagine to be postcolonial will always be deeply implicated in western discursive practices.

7.4. An African feminist peacebuilding theory

The findings contribute towards understanding of African feminist peacebuilding that is grounded in research participants' experiences of repairing the social fabric of the lives of displaced persons and communities in Northern Uganda. This standpoint offers an imagination of peacebuilding that is not overly reliant on ideals of individualism, homogenised articulations of femininity, or an uncritical engagement with Africa's gendered colonial histories. This study thus offers some insights into a decolonial framing of peacebuilding that challenges neo-liberal peacebuilding paradigms that continue to dominate policy frameworks of governments and

international development organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and World Bank (Campbell, Chandler & Shabaratnam, 2011; Heathershaw, 2013; Pugh, Cooper & Turner, 2008; Richmond, 2006; 2012).

From the standpoint of women peace activists who participated, the study has offered insights on strategies that problematise polarised narratives and practices of 'self-other relations' (Hudson, 2016: 6) by constructing more complex and holistic understandings of militarism, war, and peacebuilding in Africa. These insights are reflective of women's everyday life experiences as they cooperate with and/or resist neo-liberal militarised patriarchal systems of oppression. Note that specific conclusions cannot be made about differences between ethnic groups because the research questions and methodology of the study did not enable a thorough comparison.

In synthesizing and crystallizing the key findings of this study, I have concluded that certain key features could be 'markers' towards conceptualizing an African feminist peacebuilding theory. These markers would entail:

1. A nuanced intersectional analysis of women's socio-economic and political power within militarised contexts. This requires an understanding of how power works in militarised contexts and how this power is located in women's bodies, networks, and spheres of influence in the communities where peacebuilding interventions are undertaken. This ensures that women's social positions across race/ethnicity, class, age, location in the family, and so on, are understood beyond normative (and often homogenised) framings of femininity. This would ensure that women's power and agency is deliberately centred in social change processes without inadvertently giving undue emphasis to men's realities and concomitant versions of masculine power. It also ensures that there is no over emphasis of women's vulnerability as victims of violence.

2. Adequate focus is given to understanding and drawing on local efforts to build peace by paying attention to gendered experiences of survival. In this study, it was found that 'fractured masculinities' contributed to an expansion of women's socio-economic roles in family networks. This enhanced some women's capacity to build peace in a way that partly subverted patriarchal family relationships in precariously reconstituted family arrangements.

3. An articulation of militarism as a social and economic system that is intertwined with colonial histories of violence as well as patriarchal values and customs that pitch masculine power as normative. This ensures that resistance to and transformation of colonial patriarchies is a fundamental part of any peacebuilding intervention.

4. Shifts in gendered power are taken into account, especially with regard to markers of socio-economic and political power. These markers include land and other resources that are central to a society's capacity to create human security and sense of social harmony.

An application of elements of this African Feminist theorisation of peacebuilding to Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid could reveal various versions of gendered fragility and insecurity that are embedded in social, political and material realities that each actor in the pyramid contend with. This would reveal a nuanced understanding of local women who hold important spaces of power and influence and have the possibility of creating sustainable peace.

Figure 8: Peace Building Pyramid – Women's Spaces of Power

<u>**Track 1(Level 1) – Top Leaders**</u>

Influenced leaders in formal peace processes by:

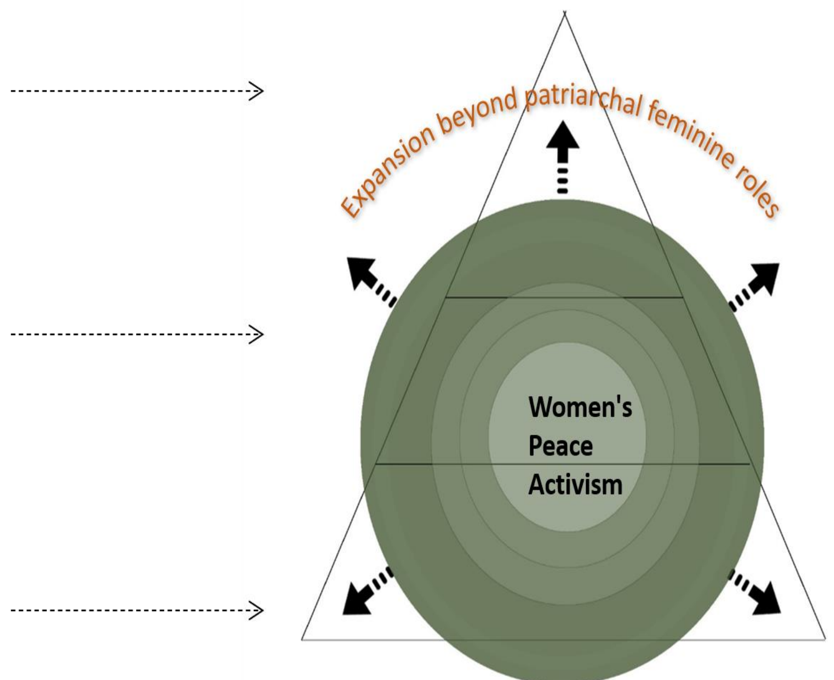
- Demanding changes are made to government-led post-conflict policies and projects
- Putting pressure on clan elders to conduct cleansing rituals
- Influencing leaders of LRA to demobilize and release abducted children

<u>**Track 2(Level 2) – Middle range Leaders**</u>

- Held positions as religious leaders
- Held negotiations with leaders of Ugandan army, militia groups and government
- Mediated land disputes alongside clan elders
- Partnered with international development organizations

<u>**Track 3(Level 3) – Grassroot Leaders**</u>

- Leveraged friendship networks and used personal resources to provide for displaced people
- Established small scale income generation activities
- Used local government offices and church networks to provide for displaced people



For Northern Uganda – one analysis of this would be the presence of destabilised fragile masculinities that affected the social fabric of the community actors at all levels - top, middle and grassroots. The study showed that men were unable to cope with the impact of militarism and social upheaval while certain women (who lived in towns where people fled to) were effective middle level actors who worked alongside other actors such as religious leaders, church groups, and international development agencies. The middle level actors thus comprised a relatively large (compared to top-level actors) number of women whose influence in society was due to intersections of gender, geographic location, class, ethnicity and lineage. Through a nuanced analysis of the positionalities of women who founded peace groups, the study revealed how social gaps created by fragile masculinities were filled by women's expanded material and social influence in the communities they worked with. This enhanced the capacity of this level of actors to build peace in a way that partly subverted patriarchal and militarised family relationships in precariously reconstituted family arrangements.

Taking into account Johan Galtung's theory of structural and cultural violence as systemic 'invisible' violence embedded in the way society functions, the study revealed how patriarchy, a form of structural and cultural violence, got reproduced in different ways. This reproduction and reproducibility was not just contingent but constitutive acts embedded within histories of militarism that became part of the way communities coped. The study found that women's peace groups defined violence outside the public framing expressed in the formal peace talks led by the Ugandan government that emphasised an end to gun violence as a signifier of peace. The women's peace groups pointed out that peace was much more complex than the ceasing of gun-violence. This meant that they had already understood that the form of violence that they were facing was structural. Their explanation of peace included a recognition of the need to transform structural violence that was reproduced within precariously reconstituted family structures. This was reflected in their peacebuilding activities that acknowledged economic, physical, psychosocial and spiritual experiences of violence that they sought to address through their peacebuilding activities. Initiatives such as group storytelling and their support of cleansing ceremonies and medical camps, for example, that addressed the health, psychosocial, spiritual and cultural aspects of violence that the war created, while income generation activities sought to offer alternative livelihoods that assisted in re-building the socio-economic fabric of families. These activities showed that they were conscious of iterative aspects of militarised violence that kept being reproduced even after gun-violence ceased.

As discussed in Chapter 6, this collective approach to healing and economic well-being created an opportunity for the survivors to learn more about the broader context of the war in Northern Uganda. They were able to find solace and support in these group experiences and could also locate the causes of the war which went beyond their behaviour as individuals. Thus, these women's peace groups may have also contested colonial parameters of harm and healing that rely too heavily on individualistic, ethnicised interpretations of violence and peace.

7.5. Recommendations

Finally, there will always be a need for further research, especially pertaining to building a more comprehensive theory about an African Feminist Perspective to Peacebuilding. There is a need for more comparative research on African women as peacebuilders on the African continent. Whilst mixed methodologies (quantitative as well as qualitative) may be valuable in yielding more rigorous data, the choice of methodologies should always be guided by the purpose and aim of the research. When considering further research into this topic of an African Feminist Perspective to Peacebuilding using a standpoint epistemology, I recommend participatory action research as a valuable methodology. A further recommendation is to avail a synopsis of this research and its findings to community peace groups in Uganda and various aid and development organisations that are presently providing funds to Uganda. Relevant government departments could also benefit from these insights.

7.6. Concluding statement

It was incredibly humbling, and it was a great privilege to be privy to the experiences of these women peace activists as well as the beneficiaries of various community peace groups. I hope that insights gained through this research may be a springboard for future research and for more holistic and strategic interventions into the lives of women and girls and all who are still experiencing the negative impact of the war and the ongoing violence in Uganda.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION A: Profile of Interviewees

Age: ....

Present Role/occupation/ work: ....

Ethnicity: ....

Religion: ....

Marital status: ....

Number of children: ....

Number of Siblings: ....

Members of family in house: ....

1. SECTION B: WOMEN EXPERIENCES OF PEACE AND CONFLICT

Please tell me about yourself (age, family members, work, etc)

Tell me about your experiences during fighting and armed conflict. How were you affected? Where were you living, what were you doing, who were members of your family when fighting/war broke out?

What are your most vivid memories of the war?

Describe how your life changed as a result of the war.

What aspects of your role as a woman in the family changed as a result of the war?

Why do you think these changes occurred?

What is your understanding of ‘peace’? What is ‘peace’ to you? Explore.

After these experiences of fighting and war, what do you think are the most important aspects of creating peace in your community?

In your opinion, how do you think being a woman shapes your understanding of peace?

Can you describe women’s contribution to armed conflict by given examples. (ask about women who fuel fighting/conflict ; ask about women who took on other roles/influences)

What happened to you during the war? Explain how you were affected/implicated/involved when fighting broke out.

In what ways do you think women’s involvement in the fighting/war differed from that of men? Explain what these differences were/are. Give real life examples of differences.

2. SECTION C: GENDER AND PEACE

Share with me your understanding of womanhood. (Explore)

How does your understanding of womanhood differ from manhood? Any similarities?

In which ways do you think your background (ethnic, family, etc) influenced your understanding of womanhood/manhood?

In your efforts to create peace, why did you decide to work with women (and not men?)?

Why did you form “STATE NAME OF WOMEN’S ORGANISATION”? What motivated you? What were you hoping to achieve by forming this organisation? What is vision and mission of your organisation?

Describe the kinds of things you do in your organisation. In what ways do these actions/activities contribute to creating peace?

Which of experiences of creating peace stand out for you? Which experiences have been most memorable/significant for you?

Describe how forming this organisation and working for 'peace' in 'NAME AREA WHERE PERSON LIVES' has changed your life.

Do you think your efforts to create peace have anything to do with fostering equality between men and women in your community? Explain

Do you think there is any connection/link between creating peace and fostering equality between men and women? (explore)

3. SECTION D: WOMEN BUILDING PEACE

What does 'building peace' actually mean to you? Give examples – individual level, community level, society level, national level, any others? Give examples of each level.

Describe the most difficult experience you have encountered since you formed your organisation. (explore with examples)

What experiences have you had of women building peace? Give examples

What experiences have you had of men building peace? Give examples

Any links/similarities/differences you noticed? Give examples. (Explore embedded meanings by probing)

APPENDIX 2: GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

SECTION A: Profile of Interviewees (separate sheet for each particiant)

Age: ....

Present Role/occupation/ work: ....

Ethnicity: ....

Religion: ....

Marital status: ....

Number of children: ....

Number of Siblings: ....

Members of family in house: ....

4. SECTION B: EXPERIENCES OF BEING PART OF WOMEN'S GROUPS

Introduce yourself and tell me when you became part of (STATE NAME OF ORGANISATION) activities?

What type of activities were you involved in?

5. SECTION C: GENDER AND PEACE

Which of experiences of creating peace stand out for you as you took part in above stated activities?

Which experiences have been most memorable/significant for you?

Do you think your efforts to create peace have anything to do with fostering equality between men and women in your community? Explain (explore contrasting views)

Do you think there is any connection/link between creating peace and fostering equality between men and women? (explore contrasting views)

6. SECTION D: WOMEN BUILDING PEACE

What does 'building peace' actually mean to you? Give examples – individual level, community level, society level, national level, any others? Give examples of each level.

Describe the most difficult experience you have encountered since you took part in activities of (STATE NAME OF WOMEN'S GROUP) (explore with examples)

What experiences have you had of women building peace? Give examples

What experiences have you had of men building peace? Give examples

Any links/similarities/differences you noticed? Give examples. (Explore embedded meanings by probing)

APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM

This consent form enables you to state that you agree(or not) to being interviewed. The research aims to explore women's notions of peacebuilding based on narratives of African women activists in selected contexts of Northern Uganda. The research objectives are:

- To investigate how women have experienced armed conflict in Northern Uganda.
- To examine particular histories of armed conflict in Uganda that have shaped women's meanings of conflict and peacebuilding.
- To explore how women have contributed to conflict in Northern Uganda
- To explore the ways in which women have made unique contributions to peacebuilding.
- To ascertain the various challenges women experience in peacebuilding.

Lead Researcher: Yaliwe Clarke

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have been informed about the purpose of this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

☐

4. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded

______________________	______________	______________________
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

______________________	______________	______________________
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

APPENDIX 4: ETHICS CLEARANCE

DOCTORAL DEGREES BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
Masingene Building,
Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701
Tel: +27 21 650 2202 Fax: +27 21 650 4913
E-mail: janine.isaacs@uct.ac.za

03 October 2013

Ms Y Clarke CLRYAL001
Corner of Main Rd and Penzance Rd
Observatory
Cape Town
yayaclarke@gmail.com

Dear Ms Clarke

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION AS A PhD CANDIDATE

I am pleased to inform you that the Doctoral Degrees Board has approved your admission as a candidate for the PhD under the supervision of Dr C O'Brien.

The University requires that you are registered for a minimum period of two years, provided you maintain unbroken registration and comply with the rules for the degree. If you first register for the degree after 1 May, you may not count the remainder of the year as part of the minimum prescribed period of study for the programme. Provided you have met with these requirements, the earliest date on which you will be able to graduate is therefore two years after your first registration. I would like to remind you that you must renew your registration every year, not later than the last day of February.

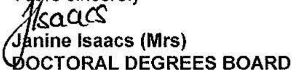
Senate has adopted a set of guidelines for supervision for the information and use of candidates and supervisors. A copy of this is attached and we hope it will be useful.

The rules for the PhD (copy enclosed) give the dates by which you must notify this office of your intention to submit a thesis for examination. Early notification alerts the DDB to prepare for the examination process by getting examiners nominated, approaching them and obtaining their agreement before your thesis arrives. When advising of intention to submit, include the following information - student number, full names, postal address, thesis title, department and name of supervisor/s where any supervisor is not in the same department or at another university please indicate this.

Please note that there is an upper limit of 80 000 words on the main text of your thesis. Any request to exceed this limit must be discussed with the supervisor and final approval must be obtained from the Dean.

We wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely



Janine Isaacs (Mrs)
DOCTORAL DEGREES BOARD

cc: Dr C O'Brien, Social Development
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
Ref: CC042013
Attachments

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

PARLIAMENT BUILDING P.O.BOX 7168 KAMPALA, TELEPHONES: 254881/6, / 343934, 343926, 343943, 233717, 344026, 230048, FAX: 235459/256143
Email: secretary@op.go.ug, Website: www.officeofthepresident.go.ug

ADM 154/212/01

January 7, 2014

The Resident District Commissioner, Gulu District
The Resident District Commissioner, Lira District
The Resident District Commissioner, Kitgum District

This is to introduce to you **Clarke Yaliwe** a Researcher who will be carrying out a research entitled **"WOMEN IN PEACE BUILDING IN AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF NORTHERN UGANDA"** for a period of **01 (one) year** in your district.

She has undergone the necessary clearance to carry out the said project.

Please render her the necessary assistance.

By copy of this letter **Clarke Yaliwe** is requested to report to the Resident District Commissioners of the above districts before proceeding with the Research.

Alenga Rose
FOR: SECRETARY, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Copy to: Clarke Yaliwe