

# ***“The Bending of Spears”***

***producing consensus for peace & development in Northern Uganda***

***“Lacwec tye!”***

This report is dedicated to the one who has inspired it and is alone responsible for creating the consensus which it represents

December 1997

Independent Consultant: Dennis Pain, M.Soc.Sci., Ph.D.

commissioned by: **International Alert**  
1 Glyn Street  
London  
SE11 5HT

Tel: +44 (0)171 793 8383  
Fax: +44 (0)171 582 9702

in partnership with: **Kacoke Madit**  
350 East Street  
Walworth  
London  
SE17 2SX

Fax: +44 (0)171 701 6250

## **“THE BENDING OF SPEARS”**

### OVERVIEW

Three intertwined strands are evident in the report of the way forward to a resolution of the conflict:

- the need for dialogue between the Government, Acholi leaders and the LRA/M
- the need for an economic programme for self-reliance and development
- the need for comprehensive reconciliation, nationally and locally, incorporating necessary compensation

The report is based on detailed in-country consultations from June to November 1997, including the Government of Uganda, Acholi leaders in Kampala, Gulu, Kitgum and London, together with representatives of the LRA/M who have been involved in a protracted war which was started 11 years ago and has cost a heavy toll in loss of life, maiming of civilians and traumatisation of children. The independent consultant and author of the report has a lifetime of involvement in Uganda, with detailed knowledge of Acholi in particular based on past field research in the area.

The report has been produced in partnership with Kacoke Madit, the coordinators of an April 1997 meeting in London representing Acholi of all political persuasions, who have facilitated its genesis and development. It was commissioned by International Alert. The views expressed are not necessarily those of International Alert, but convey those expressed to the author by the parties concerned. The “Proposals for Consideration” are based on discussions with the parties and are supported by Kacoke Madit.

Leadership in Acholi is based on enabling a consensus view to form and therefore receive the support of all parties. Such an approach is difficult to achieve in situations of social breakdown. This report shows that such a consensus is emerging from the devastation of the current insecurity, which will draw in both the Government of Uganda and the rebel LRA/M to a resolution which is genuine and sustainable.

Talks between the Government and the LRA/M broke down in 1994 and are likely to do so again if the parties do not have an advance understanding of the necessary agenda for dialogue, which this report clearly outlines at the head of each chapter. Any partial dialogue, leaving out significant areas, is unlikely to lead to a stable resolution. Nor could any dialogue achieve success if any of the three necessary parties to the talks are excluded - firstly the Government, secondly the Acholi who have been caught between the fighting forces, feeling alienated by government attitudes and actions while suffering abuses at the hands of the fighters, and thirdly the rebel LRA/M. All of these have concerns which must be addressed if the environment which engenders insecurity is not to recur.

The economic programme outlined is not simply a programme to be considered once there is peace and security, but rather an integral part of the resolution itself. Acholi patterns of recruitment into the army and consequent over-representation for nearly 60 years have left the Acholi vulnerable targets in periods of civil conflict. The cause of this historic over-identification with the security forces has been economic as a result of long-term under-development of the area giving the uneducated limited alternatives to a stagnant agricultural system. Without an economic programme of hope for the future, the cycle will repeat itself, compounded by the collapse of the education system in Acholi and a generation of young people being deprived of an opportunity to compete on equal terms in Uganda. The annual cost of the war currently far exceeds the estimated \$34m recommended for the various aspects of a significant economic programme over three years.

The unique linkage in this proposal is for the donor community to channel some of its economic contribution through the requirement for compensation to be paid within the community by those who have committed personal offences of violence. Acholi traditional resolution of conflict and violence stands among the highest practices anywhere in the world. After factual investigation, it requires acknowledgment of responsibility by the offender, followed by repentance and then payment of compensation, leading to reconciliation through *mato oput*, the shared drinking of a bitter juice from a common gourd. This practice of reconciliation lies at the heart of a traditional approach to “cooling” the situation and healing the land and restoring relationships, far beyond the limited approaches of conservative western legal systems and a formal amnesty for offences against the state. LRA commanders, feeling themselves isolated and vulnerable, admitted in 1994 that their people had committed violent offences against individuals. All Acholi know that because of atrocities, particularly against children since 1994, even if declining in recent months, all involved must go through *mato oput* reconciliation.

Lacking the means for those returning from the bush to pay compensation, the international community is asked to supply the means along with resettling former fighters, avoiding the impossible task of differentiating the coerced from the instigators of violence. By going through this process it is intended that the offenders will no longer be open to fresh charges in the national courts. This prospect will create the climate in which children will be released to return home and be reconciled.

The payment of compensation will then be channelled into the building of memorial primary schools in every sub-county and two memorial centres for the disabled. These will help the victims of this vicious war and their families to identify with something which will in time produce a positive result in education and training for a future life. The symbolic nature of this contribution reflects the high value Acholi place on education, having once been proportionately among the highest educated men in the country.

The principle of compensation as part of the reconciliation process is extended to Government with the possibility of a partial re-stocking in recognition of the way in which the Acholi lost \$25m worth of cattle a decade ago. The report also addresses the need for reconciliation between groups within Uganda and recognises the national and international political issues which have complicated this war. With the Government of Uganda combining with the Acholi to resolve this conflict, the country will find a new security from the fears of regional destabilisation caused by conflict in neighbouring Sudan.

The international community, as donors or as observers at the talks or as monitors of the peace, both NGOs and governments, is asked to make a contribution to this resolution in support of this culturally appropriate and dynamic approach.

When Acholi are able to participate normally in the wider Ugandan polity from a peaceful base, they will once again find their voice, always outspoken and never tempered with flattery, on issues of national political importance. They and the nation of Uganda will be the richer for that.

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### CONTENTS

	page
Overview	1
Contents	4
Introduction	7
Proposal (A)	9
Maps	
Uganda Districts	10
Gulu: Counties & Sub-Counties	11
Kitgum: Counties & Sub-Counties	12
Chapter 1: Working for Peace	13
Talks Agenda - Consensus	13
Emerging Consensus	13
Negative Factors	15
Leading for Consensus	17
Proposal 1(a) to 1(d)	18
Chapter 2: Talking of Peace	19
Talks Agenda - Dialogue	19
Cry for Peace	19
LRA/M Commitment to Dialogue	20
Government Commitment to Dialogue	23
Bringing Convergence	24
Proposal 2(a) to 2(d)	26
Chapter 3: Talking Positively	28
Talks Agenda - Reversing Sense of Alienation of Acholi	28
Rebuilding Trust	28
History and Myth	30
Styles of Leadership	32
Accepting Responsibility	34
Proposal 3(a)	35
Chapter 4: Investing in Peace	36
Talks Agenda - Economic Programme	36
Economic Investment Linked to Reconciliation	38
Culturally Appropriate Investment	38
Participatory Development	40
Link between Education, Agriculture & Livestock	42
International Donor Support	44
Investment by Acholi in Diaspora	45
Costs in Perspective	46
Proposals 4(a) to 4(o)	46

Chapter 5: Maintaining the Peace	50
Talks Agenda - Guarantors	50
Guaranteeing the Peace	50
Community Policing	52
Assuring Safety	52
Extending the Reassurance	53
Proposals 5(a) to 5(e)	54
Chapter 6: Clearing the Guilt	56
Talks Agenda - Resolution of Offence/Amnesty	56
Constitutional Amnesty for Offences against the State	56
Traditional Resolution for Offences against the Person	57
Recording Offence Resolution	59
Two Possible Bills for Amnesty & for Traditional Conflict Resolution	60
A. Amnesty	60
B. Traditional Offence Resolution	61
Truth Commission	63
Opportunity for Reassurance	64
Legitimacy	64
Proposals 6(a) to 6(d)	65
Chapter 7: A Place in the Peace	66
Talks Agenda - Re-incorporation of Fighters and Abductees	66
Security & Hope	66
Education & Skills Training	68
Trauma & Counselling	69
Army Recruitment	70
Resettlement Package Options	70
Demobilisation	72
Proposals 7(a) to 7(d)	72
Chapter 8: Restoring Relationships	74
Talks Agenda - Reconciliation	74
Traditional Authority	75
Traditional Conflict Resolution	79
Contextualising Traditional Reconciliation	79
“Cooling” the Situation	79
Compromised Elderly	81
<i>Mato Oput</i> Reconciliation	82
Compensation and Memorial Primary Schools	83
Community Reconciliation & Truth	84
Proposals 8(a) to 8(f)	86
Chapter 9: Peace in the Place	88
Talks Agenda - Spiritual Aspect	88
Curses of the Past	88
Spirits of the Dead	89
Spiritual Power	90
Proposals 9(a) to 9(b)	90
Chapter 10: Proclaiming Peace	92

Talks Agenda - Public Event	92
Bringing it to a Head	92
Symbols of Public Healing	94
Proposals 10(a) to 10(b)	94
Chapter 11: Peace to Those Outside	96
Extra-Talks Agenda - Peace Across the Border	96
The Sudan Factor	96
Proposal 11(a)	98
Chapter 12: Room for Peace	99
Pre-Talks Agenda - Modalities of Dialogue	99
Three Parties	99
Independent Chairman	101
Convenors	102
Observers	102
Process	102
Proposals 12(a) to 12(f)	102
Chapter 13: Talks Agenda Summaries	105
Chapter 14: Proposals for Consideration, arising out of the consultation:	110
By Government of Uganda	110
By Acholi	111
By the LRA/M	112
By the International Community	113
By Conflict Resolution Groups	114
Directed Generally	115
Bibliography	116
Glossary of Terms & Acholi Words	117

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### INTRODUCTION

This report has evolved out of the bringing together of various initiatives, facilitated by the independence of its author, an international consultant familiar with Acholi from a lifetime of involvement in Uganda, at the suggestion of friends from Acholi and from Ankole in particular, and funded independently through International Alert, an international organisation specialising in conflict resolution. It has been carried out with the cooperation of Kacoke Madit, the organisers of an effective representative meeting of Acholi from all perspectives in London in April 1997, as a development of its resolutions (see Appendix).

First contacts were made late May 1997 and the formal part of the consultancy occurred from September to November 1997 with meetings and interviews in London, Nairobi, Kampala, Gulu and Kitgum. The very first meeting took place coincidentally on the lawns of Nile Mansions on the exact spot where one of Uganda's and Acholi's greatest leaders, Archbishop Janani Luwum, a close friend of the consultant, was denounced by Amin with false accusations before being shot in February 1977.

The consultancy was public without being publicised and discreet without being secret. Those met included Acholi of national and local significance known for their varied views and associations - DP, UPC, Liberal Party, NRM, LRM; from East and West; Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal; secular modernists and traditional believers; traditional elders and *Rwodi-mo* and Church leaders; local politicians and MPs; District administrators and professionals holding local and national offices; exiles and government ministers; LRA representatives, sympathisers and former fighters; bi-lateral and UN donors and NGOs; lawyers, agriculturalists, economists and educationalists; men and women from under 20 to over 80 years. The potential contributions of several people were missed owing to timings and travel commitments.

Discussions were mostly held in English, with translation from Acholi when preferred. The publication of a UNICEF-supported report on children and the LRA by the US based Human Rights Watch and a report by Amnesty International and the latter's awaited report on the UPDF, together with the USAID-sponsored report “The Anguish of Northern Uganda” by Robert Gersony putting in perspective much of the background to the conflict, enabled this consultancy to concentrate on the way forward (see Appendices Nos 4 & 5 for Executive Summaries of two of these reports). Advice on general principles

from representatives of the Mennonite Central Committee, Quaker Peace & Service and the Newick Park Initiative has been valued. The process of which this report is a part has been facilitated by the prayers of many, including the formal Prayers for Peace in Kitgum in August and in Kampala in November 1997.

Reference to faults on many sides are not intended to undermine parties to the conflict nor to perpetuate ill-will. In naming the past, it is hoped that it can now be acknowledged and forgiven in order to rebuild trust for the future. The report does not seek to apportion blame, nor does it seek to be so superficial that it avoids any unpleasant references. However, such references are intended to be given within an overall balance in the interests of supporting Ugandans working for a resolution.

The purpose of the report has been to feed back what was presented to the independent consultant to those who have a role to play in resolving the conflict in northern Uganda. Where quotations in this report are not attributed, the speaker is an Acholi speaking within Uganda and the view is representative of similar views expressed by other Acholi of a variety of political and social backgrounds. All the Acholi interviewed are at least acknowledged "opinion leaders". Other sources are indicated by their general position rather than by name unless this is significant and not confidential. International donor potential outlined in the report (Chapter 4 & Appendix No 6) shows an informal overview of possible areas and magnitudes of interest and should not be interpreted as official commitments.

If together we are to build a chair on which we can safely sit, what pieces and materials does it require and to what design, so that when we come to put it together we do not disagree as to whether we are building a chair or a table, and all the materials are available and prepared to fit into each other, not lacking one leg so that it becomes unstable. This chair, or jigsaw of pieces, should provide, when put together, a complete picture and stable resolution. This was how the task of the consultancy was presented in meetings.

The structure of the report is a division into chapters according to distinct issues which it is considered must be addressed when embarking on dialogue in this situation. For each issue, at the start of the chapter, there is a summary of the points which the dialogue must cover. Then follow descriptive sections arising from the field-work and the views expressed to the consultant by all parties. At the end of each chapter there are listed recommendations which relate to the issues of that chapter. As a Government Minister once said at a very early stage, "there is nothing new in this" since there have been superficial attempts in an uncoordinated way at various times to work on most aspects - talks or amnesty or reconciliation or resettlement. However these have never been fully worked out and certainly never

attempted in an integrated and complementary way to create an overall programme at one time. Any attempts to pick out the parts which suit certain parties and leave others out is sure to lead to failure, the responsibility for which will lie at the door of those who attempt a partial solution.

Recent informal contacts being made by the parties and the actions being taken to develop the necessary infrastructure and capacity for a comprehensive resolution, are themselves creating a certain momentum for peace. The issues raised go deeper to the roots of the conflict and the call for dialogue is much wider than traditional and limited “negotiation”.

The result is a report which summarises the views and words expressed by Ugandans themselves and reflects the highest qualities of Acholi leadership and culture - outspoken expressions of truth and reality, responding to each other’s contributions until consensus can be reached. This report presents that evident consensus and offers the basis for dialogue on the details of the way forward. This should lead not only to an end of the conflict, but to reconciliation, healing, hope and a dynamic economic and moral future from which the stumps of potential conflict have been rooted out.

*This report was written by the Independent Consultant, Dennis Pain, after extensive consultation with Ugandan parties concerned. It was undertaken in part as a follow-up to the Kacoke Madit conference in London in April 1997 and at the request of a number of individual Ugandans concerned with the impact of the conflict. It was commissioned by International Alert. The presentation of views expressed are the responsibility of the Independent Consultant, Dennis Pain. However, in its approach to consensus out of diversity, the report is commended by Kacoke Madit, who have been active partners in facilitating the work of the consultant.*

**“Ada ki gen!”**

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

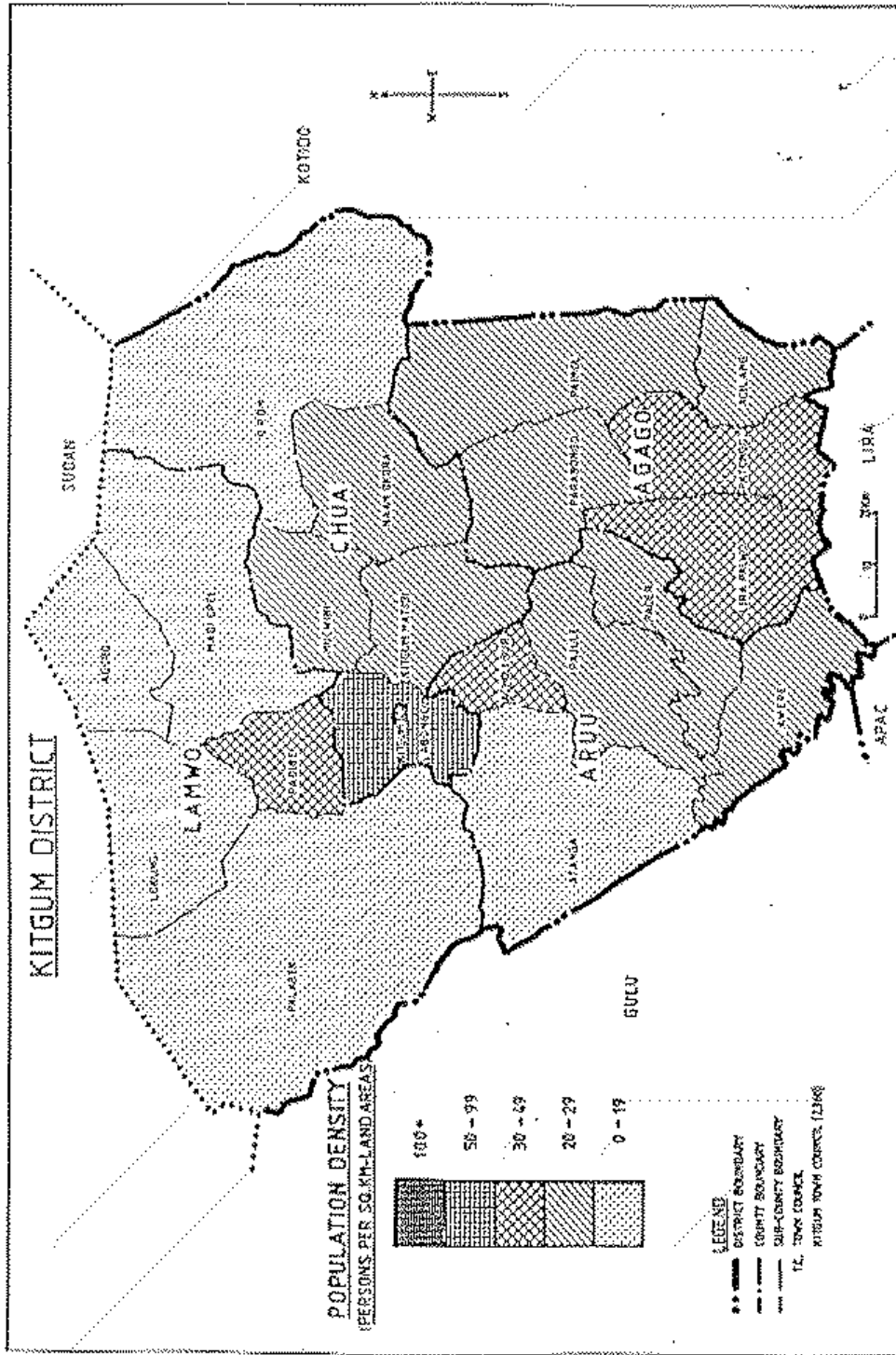
- A. All parties contributing to the resolution of the conflict in northern Uganda - participants, promoters, convenors and Chairman, observers and monitors, and donors - are encouraged to build on the existing consensus approach and seek an integrated and coordinated solution by discussing the full range of issues with the three parties indicated in this report and avoiding any divisive and partial approaches.**





MAP 3: KITGUM - COUNTIES & SUB-COUNTIES

KITGUM DISTRICT



## **“THE BENDING OF SPEARS”**

### Chapter 1

#### WORKING FOR PEACE

“A failure to identify the real interests of the people ... is a failure of leaders since they have not created an atmosphere where ordinary people can discover their real interests” - President Yoweri Museveni 1997 p188.

“Peace talk means transforming a situation of death into life” - Joseph Kony in 1994

#### *1. Talks Agenda - Consensus:*

- 1.1 resolution based on consensus
- 1.2 marginalising personal interests
- 1.3 persuading divergent external political interests

#### EMERGING CONSENSUS

In April 1997 a meeting was organised in London entitled “**Kacoke Madit**” to bring together a full cross-section of Acholi, including government ministers and administrators, church leaders and opinion leaders from Acholi, exiles and representatives of the LRA/LRM. The Kacoke Madit meeting was the first event to move towards consensus, which is the essential basis of any authentic Acholi politics. Kacoke Madit (“KM”) produced resolutions to pursue lasting and durable peace and to encourage the LRA/M to concretise its declared intention to resolve the conflict by peaceful means and the Uganda Government to reciprocate, with an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties; to mobilise resources for immediate and long-term rehabilitation and to create a commission to encourage investment in Acholi; to set up a task force to follow up the resolutions; to promote unity and to strengthen cultural heritage and teamwork, with KM continuing as a forum (full details in the attached Appendix No 1).

Since April 1997, KM has continued to actively pursue its recommendations by relating to the Government of Uganda and the LRA/M and to Acholi leaders and participants from the April meeting in order to establish common ground for peaceful dialogue. Relationships have been established with NGOs and governments to generate support for a resolution and contacts passed to one international organisation to enable them to have the potential to act as independent convenors for a future meeting between the parties. They have generally sought to broaden the partnerships for peaceful reconciliation so that all parties might co-operate towards that goal without institutional or personal competition.

The RDC Gulu has also tried to follow up Kacoke Madit with a 3-week seminar in September for local leaders in the District - heads of secondary and primary schools and TTC lecturers, Department Heads, business and community leaders, religious leaders and NGOs. This followed 3 months of meetings held by the RDC in villages, which were also attended by a number of LRA fighters. The theme of the seminar was "The Struggle for Peace and Development" and it addressed two major issues: firstly to find out the cause of the escalating/continuing conflict and secondly, if peace were to come tomorrow, what should be done for the people. It set up 5 sub-committees: Peace; Cultural; Education; Economics; Mass Media; and the Chairs and Secretaries of these committees are continuing to work to determine what can be done and at what cost. They also hope to establish a magazine for information which would entertain contributions from all viewpoints. The seminar also considered how to encourage people to come in from the bush in order to build a peace.

Meetings held in relation to this consultancy recognised the danger of partial solutions and even of a high percentage of fighters coming in, as these would leave the process in disarray and could harden the position of those who would demand a total solution. However, this initiative has identified the potential for a resolution which would be acceptable to fighters in the bush as well as to the Government of Uganda and the people of Acholi.

The Gulu seminar also gave an opportunity to challenge the army on its operational strategy and attitudes, asking the army to decentralise and move out to county and sub-county levels and to recognise how to handle child fighters in order to enable them to be re-incorporated into the community. The emphasis has been shifted to defending people in the home villages and providing places of safety to which they can readily run when concerned for their security, rather than the discredited policy of forcing villagers to move semi-permanently into "Protected Village Camps" with all their inadequate provision of basic facilities of shelter, food, water and sanitation, health care and education. At its height there had been 182,000 displaced persons in Gulu District under the earlier regressive military policy.

## NEGATIVE FACTORS

As the Acholi, from LRM to NRM and all shades of opinion between, move towards a consensus approach they expect three distinct groups to oppose a resolution in order that they may pursue their selfish personal interests.

There may be those within the government and army who wish to create an appearance of high insecurity for the purpose of ensuring continuing high levels of funding from Parliament, with the added opportunity for officers to divert funds for personal ends as well continue to receive operational allowances.

At a Press Conference on 29/10/97, the President is reported in New Vision to have rejected demands by the Army Commander that the defence budget be increased to enable the UPDF defeat numerous armed rebellions in the country. “(He) can’t convince me to increase the defence budget when they have a lot of wastage. They must first plug the wastage before they can ask for more money”, he is reported to have said.

Similarly there are LRA supporters outside Uganda who have a personal interest in the continuation of the war as an opportunity for diverting fundraising or for personal selfish political ends which have nothing to do with the interests of Acholi.

The third group are a frequently attested group of businessmen in Gulu who handle stolen goods and launder the proceeds of violent robbery committed under the umbrella of the war. Those in their employ are reported to be more afraid of being arbitrarily killed than are true LRA fighters. These elements are increasingly being identified and their disruptive contributions minimised by their respective wider constituencies in government, the LRA and the Acholi community.

A number of Acholi see these groups who would want the war to continue as being party to incidents which perpetuate or exacerbate the war. The October attacks on convoys on the Pakwach road are seen in this light. In the view of an Acholi NRM political activist, those behind these attacks on non-Acholi in transit are “either army wishing to extend the war, or army collaborating with the LRA to allow such attacks so that the LRA can be seen as strong and so present a challenge to the President for the soldiers being inadequately paid for doing the government’s dirty work, or a result of highly intelligent

collaborators (of the LRA) seeking to relieve the bitterness of Acholi and their frustration at the suffering”.

A more substantial counter-indicator for a comprehensive resolution stems from those who identify underlying political problems which they believe need to be addressed if any resolution is to be long-lasting. From this perspective the start of the 1986 war, although triggered by NRA/UFM/FEDEMU abuses in Acholi, had underlying economic and political causes. The economic causes of under-development and fear of cutting Acholi off from future participation in the national economy are addressed in this conflict resolution proposal. The political problems listed in 1986 are said to have included issues of the control of the army by a group of associates from one area, its lack of equitable representation at all levels and the overlap between military positions and political offices, and the recruiting of under-age children, together with the use of non-Ugandans, particularly Rwandese refugees. From its inception, the present NRM government is seen by these elements as a military government, supported by elections on its terms.

Most significantly, the political problem quoted is that of the banning of normal activities of political parties other than the NRM administration. These issues are now presented as the question of demobilisation of an over-large UPDF for peace and its independence from the political power, together with the national question of the Constitutional restrictions against political parties outside the NRM until after a referendum in 2000, with the 1997 NRM enactment said to make the NRM Convention every two years as the highest authority in Uganda, supreme above Parliament. From this perspective the NRM must make compromises if there is to be a just peace supported by the international community.

There is concern expressed that the NRM are unwilling to be flexible regarding their structures. The Secretary General of the DP, and unsuccessful 1996 Presidential candidate, Ssemogerere is reported to have said that “what the Acholi are disagreeing about are national issues, but the Acholi take maximum risk on themselves”.

However, within Uganda where the suffering is most keenly felt, even leading Acholi politicians who are staunchly in favour of multi-party politics appear to be arguing for a comprehensive reconciliation process which Acholi will effect before they can again find a voice and constituency from which to confront the national political questions. Political activists who oppose what they perceive as the NRM’s approach in Acholi in terms of “promoting itself as a political organisation (e.g. with the Political

Adviser to the President doing 6-months political promotion based in Gulu)” do not see this as a reason for withholding a resolution to the war.

Acknowledged multi-partyists in exile argue that human rights, economic, social and cultural, of the weak, the poor and political and ethnic minorities, need to be protected. They would hope that dialogue towards a resolution would engender a system within government which can ensure guaranteeing freedom, security and human rights, including freedom of speech.

The one outstanding current concern, which is both national and local, is that the NRM government may proceed with a Land Bill that will vest so-called unutilised land, such as in the west of Gulu District, as a national asset for re-allocation by land title to those able to access the system and pay a fee. This would directly confront the traditional radical approach to usufructory land ownership in Acholi. With insecurity preventing Acholi agricultural development, it is feared that this redefinition of land ownership would be taken up by land-hungry southern capitalist farmers who are “in the know” as happened in parts of Luwero as the war ended there. The potential for such land alienation is seen as socially explosive, with the Acholi unable to argue their case politically in the present situation. However other Acholi are confident that no such moves would be made by the Government at such a sensitive time, which could re-ignite the conflict.

Although many Acholi might support such national political agenda, it was significant that these were not raised within Uganda in the context of resolving the current conflict. That does not mean that they may not be part of the underlying problem of insecurity in Uganda. As a much respected multi-party political intellectual expressed it: “The Acholi want peace to enable economic agricultural activity and then they can talk about politics openly”. As one politician within Uganda put it: “a resolution should not be conditional on accepting the NRM political system, but we can accept a government led by the NRM, although we do not all have to support the NRM as the only political system”.

### LEADING FOR CONSENSUS

What is emerging is a remarkable consensus for peace brought about by dialogue and reconciliation which is being led, but not exclusively, by Kacoke Madit; the Parliamentary Group of Acholi MPs; individuals such as the RDC Gulu, Peter Odok, and Bishop Ochola of Kitgum; the traditional *Rwodi-mo*; and by key representatives of the Government of Uganda and of the LRA/M; supported by a co-operative network of international agencies. This partnership for peace will allow no-one to take credit for being

the ones who have delivered the peace. Indeed if any gain personal or institutional status by achieving this goal, then Acholi and lasting peace will be the losers.

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**1 (a) The emerging network for peace could now become more open in mutual acknowledgment of their complementary roles to achieve the goal of lasting reconciliation and peace.**

**1 (b) Responsibility for coordinating and extending this network for peace should lie within the Acholi community, ensuring wide partnerships across Uganda to facilitate parallel activity nationally in the future.**

**1 (c) The seminal role of Kacoke Madit in facilitating a consensus approach to a resolution should be acknowledged.**

**1 (d) Leading multi-partyists within Uganda could help by liaising with known colleagues outside Uganda to ensure that they support and endorse the consensus within Uganda for a peaceful resolution through dialogue.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 2

#### TALKING OF PEACE

As someone put it at the end of one meeting: “These are our words, our problems, which you are noting & presenting to the world”. Another said that “there has been much talking and writing in the past. If you really come to help, let us get feedback”.

#### 2. Talks Agenda - Dialogue:

- 2.1 Relative advantage of non-military option since Parliamentary Commission reported
- 2.2 Clearly indicated recognition of need for real dialogue at the right level
- 2.3 no pre-conditions
- 2.4 mutual cooling period
- 2.5 avoidance of ultimatum style
- 2.6 avoidance of any name-calling language implying negative attributes to any parties or groups

#### CRY FOR PEACE

Everywhere one goes in Acholi, there is a yearning for peace and reference to the cry of the people, their suffering, the poverty and the effects of displacement, and now on top of all this, looming famine as a result of the 1997 crop failure due to drought. People are currently dying in the “Protected Villages” due to the conditions. The call is to the LRA as well as to the government “whose duty it is to protect the people” and whom most Acholi feel have the power to resolve the war. Even the LRA choir could sing in 1994 of the Acholi being trapped in the middle, no-where to turn to except God, for “*can*” (poverty, bereavement & illness) has come upon us. Many quote the old Swahili saying that when two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers. The people of Acholi feel that they have been caught in the cross-fire.

Since the Parliamentary Commission reported early in 1997, there appears to have been a growing desire from within Uganda for dialogue to end the war in order to get back the abducted children and begin the work of healing the traumatised children as well as their peers still in schools and their families. **A military solution cannot facilitate such reconciliation and healing and will lead to a**

**potential future embittered generation which will in turn create further national insecurity.** This internal desire is echoed by the recent international reports, particularly that of Gersony. The costs of the war, both directly in expenditure and destruction of infrastructure and indirectly in terms of loss of potentially the most productive cereal and oil-seed growing area of Uganda, impacts on the whole of Uganda's economic transformation.

### LRA/M COMMITMENT TO DIALOGUE

Some question the seriousness with which the LRA leadership and possible representatives will enter peace talks. "Rebel decisions are made on a "spirit" basis, not rational. Therefore what is agreed today may be reversed tomorrow" was one Acholi opinion not based on contact experience. In fact Kony said in 1994 when he received a letter from the Government suggesting talks, he believed that the Holy Spirit was saying that "if they are genuine with truth and honesty, you can go ahead". At those abortive 1994 peace talks between Minister Betty Bigombe and Kony, in referring to a failed meeting the previous day, Kony used an Acholi proverb that "we usually blame ogwang (the wild cat) while we might need to blame gweno (the chicken)". It was his army commander who challenged the Acholi/government delegation group by group: "Are you serious?" and demanded from them a reply.

Two separate Acholi leaders who attended the talks both suggested that Kony's main thrust was rational. He referred to Kilama who had taken part in and surrendered following the 1988 Peace Agreement signed with the UPDA in Pece, Gulu, and had since been killed as well as other UPDA commanders. "What happened to Kilama will not happen to me". He went on to say that "peace talks require patience and justice. Let's quit undermining and under-rating people's integrity". Kony expressed clear views on the origin of his involvement in the war and repeatedly showed his respect for Betty Bigombe in agreeing to talks and his anger with those *ludito* ("elderly" representatives) who were originally behind the war. He asserted that God had chosen Betty Bigombe as the chief co-ordinator for peace and that in taking a personal risk she was listening to God. He continually asserted his willingness to use the talks to end the fighting and was clearly keen to see peace restored. Kony made it clear that he had no pre-conditions for the government.

In the talks, the LRA leadership referred to themselves as *adui* (= "rebels", from the Swahili "*hadui*") and Kony, in criticising the political elders who had led them into confusion, said that it was "because of (their) stupidity and weaknesses that I have become a rebel leader". In referring to Museveni as "Head

of State”, Kony expressed his willingness to sign with him an agreement, whether in Uganda or outside, provided that Betty Bigombe and other advisers assured him that this was the right thing to do. Although the meetings had this rational dimension, they also had strange aspects such as sprinkling water or digging a trench between the parties.

The talks were said to have been scuppered by a former minister, who had been part of the UPDA war against the NRA and who undermined Betty Bigombe as an Acholi “Aunty” who had married outside and on separation now had no home and therefore could not credibly negotiate on behalf of the Acholi. Kony himself denounced these elements who were not manly enough to meet with Kony yet derided a woman showing more courage than they and who made ridiculous suggestions that she either wanted to turn Kony into a woman or to offer him a post as a chief or as a Minister. To Kony this was irrelevant. Yet for a woman to negotiate did appear unacceptable in many Acholi eyes. This is believed to have influenced President Museveni to give an ultimatum of 7 days to hand in guns rather than the longer period for which Kony asked. To some observers, the impression given at those talks was that Kony saw no purpose in continuing the fighting if it was no longer supported by any mature political leadership, but that it had to be ended honourably in proper order with guarantees of safety for his people whom he wished to resettle.

The Government view is that Kony was playing for time until the new link with the Sudanese fundamentalist regime in Khartoum led to fresh arms supplies and his forces could re-group, while the UPDF was undertaking a major re-organisation and was organisationally at a weak point. That view would also confirm the rationality of Kony’s position at the time, even if surrounded with an image of “spirit” influence and rituals. Certainly evidence of the Sudan link soon became apparent (c.f. chapter 11).

The LRA currently report that “a number of us are ready to see peace attained by all means”. They believe that they “have the intellectual ability and willingness to talk peace, but it must be in the right environment”. The LRA consider that their continuing action in the latter half of 1997 confirms that they are not a spent force, but have the strength to operate across both Kitgum and Gulu Districts in spite of the large UPDF force deployed against them. From this perspective they consider that they are in a position to hold “meaningful dialogue” which would not be the case if they were simply begging for amnesty in the face of some imminent military defeat. However, they are “interested in peace with respect and dignity”.

To create a climate conducive to dialogue, the LRA would like to see “people in protected villages freed to go home” and consider that they have relaxed conditions in the rural areas in order to enable people to return and continue to be self-reliant. While in the field there were reports of the rebels collecting food near to Gulu Town and getting children to carry it, but without hurting anyone or abducting them. It is claimed that the LRA have given assurance of the safety of villagers who return as part of their recent attempts not to be seen as “anti-people”. In their view “the government wants the fear and hatred of the people against the LRA to continue” and so continue to deny the people the opportunity to live in their own homes and to cultivate. “The LRA cannot sit down with Museveni when Salim Saleh says that the camps are permanent”.

The LRA also wish to see the international community (e.g. UNHCR) or NGOs recognising the needs of Ugandan refugees in Sudan, whose needs it seeks to meet through the “Uganda Islamic Association”, stressing that they are not soliciting for funds to pursue the war but only to assist displaced people. There are reported to be 6-7,000 Ugandans in Juba District who need help, mostly in Juba town.

In spite of indications that dialogue would be welcome, the LRA are anxious to assert that they are “not saying that we have agreed to negotiate”. The content needs to be in the open, without a hidden agenda, and any resolution “must be sustainable”.

This political perspective from the LRA on dialogue may facilitate the process, contrasting with the view of many in Acholi that the nature of the problem is one of “terrorism” and of the LRA being “not truthful”. There is a concern that the LRA are isolated from experienced politicians. “It is different from earlier agreements when the rebels were in some way representative of the people with the involvement of established politicians”.

Several Acholi questioned the capacity of the LRA to enter direct talks because of their perception that the LRA lacks a clear hierarchy, although key government figures recognise that there is a structure to the LRA, albeit with a hard cohesive core of “a neat family of criminals who have committed the same crimes”. As a senior Government Minister put it: “The LRA has a military structure and control over people. Most are forced and initiated into criminality and they kill those who try to escape or who show signs of weakness”.

Some would want first to test out the credibility of claimed representatives to influence the fighters in the field or to represent them. However, the same route which achieved the direct meetings in 1994 of the

then Minister Betty Bigombe with Kony and his army commander Komakech Omona remains open. This time the agenda for discussion needs to be agreed to prevent any risk of breakdown of talks. The collapse of the previous attempt at resolution makes the current proposals more sensitive. As Kony himself put it at that time: “This time we have come to negotiate. Opportunity will never knock twice, if we fail in this exercise”. It has taken nearly four years of increased suffering for such an opportunity to knock again.

### GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO DIALOGUE

At Museveni’s instalment as President in 1986, one person in Acholi remembered him saying “We are going to pay people in their own currency. I did not honour the ‘85 Nairobi Peace Agreement because you cannot work with idiots. ... This is not only a change of government, but a fundamental change”. Another claimed from the same period that it was said in relation to the Acholi that “when the grasshoppers are shut up in a gourd, they will begin to eat one another and destroy themselves”. A diplomat reports the President recently saying that “negotiating with Kony is like giving first aid to a snake”. These negative views belie the fact that the Government has supported Peace Talks in the past in 1993/94 and could be interpreted as pursuing contacts today through the RDC and the President’s half-brother Maj. Gen. Salim Saleh. The Acholi compare Tito Okello’s willingness to negotiate with the NRA when fighting the bush war with the NRM’s apparent unwillingness to talk with Kony. The NRM counter by questioning the genuineness of Tito Okello’s negotiations in Nairobi in 1985 while airlifting weapons to Entebbe from abroad and failing to discipline soldiers.

While not willing to consider “negotiations”, the government is willing to hold “discussions” and has no problem in “discussing the grievance of Acholi with representatives of the Acholi people”. It recognises that “because of long insecurity, starting from the Amin days, Acholi has suffered and been unable to develop”. Such a realistic analysis of the suffering and its developmental consequences seem not to be part of the public debate in Uganda where the issue is often marginalised as a “northern problem”.

The Jan 1997 Report of the Committee on Defence & Internal Affairs on the War in Northern Uganda, concluded that the war should be pursued to a military solution, but in a minority report two members, including one Acholi MP, recommended peace talks. The main report’s conclusion flew in the face of the views expressed to it by the people bearing the brunt of the war, leading many Acholi to believe that the Executive put undue pressure on the Committee to confirm its own stance. However, another Acholi

member claims not to have felt any such pressure, but to have supported the conclusion out of a carefully considered personal view. If new facts are now available then the conclusion might need to be re-considered. Some feel that the time taken by the army to contain the LRA now constitutes a new position which requires re-consideration. However, the no-talks view is regularly proclaimed in the popular press by those not personally affected. “The Acholi are the victims, yet they are the ones who insist on peace”.

Some in Government remain ill at ease with negotiations on the grounds that the NRM has “shed blood to restore constitutional order and therefore cannot now breach the constitution”. Others would point out that nothing in the constitution prohibits dialogue and Parliamentary approved approaches to amnesty, traditional conflict resolution and reconciliation in the interests of national security. To then view that “the only way to get development in a district is to take up arms” is to totally underestimate the far greater costs in Acholi from civil war and its destructive forces. The underlying problem for the Government is how to deal with, and what to offer to, Kony and the hard core of the LRA. The Government fear that negotiating with Kony might send encouraging signals to other potential rebels is unlikely to be realised given the complexity of arriving at the current three-party position for dialogue. Such a fear is more real if the Acholi representatives were to be left out of the talks. While the Government has no problem in resolving differences with the Acholi, its concern is that Kony represents an illegal approach to political differences.

Those who argue against talks are widely seen as wanting to prolong the war. Even the Presidential Adviser on the Press, John Nagenda, in his personal column in *New Vision* dismissed the Gersony report’s main finding of the necessity for dialogue as ridiculous coming from Americans who refuse to have dialogue with Castro. There was no mention of the British approach to dialogue in Northern Ireland, but this point was made a few weeks later by another regular columnist, Patrick Kiggundu, in recommending talking to the various rebel groups which may “stem their viciousness to civilians”. Comments such as Nagenda’s are viewed by Acholi as the voice of sycophants, not of reason. However genuine such hawkish positions may be, there needs to be a sea change in the direction to public opinion given by senior government figures if dialogue is to take place without government losing credibility. Remarks such as the President’s on Independence Day in October 1997, identifying with the suffering of Acholi as fellow citizens, give Acholi hope of that sea-change.

## BRINGING CONVERGENCE

As one former MP put it: “Insecurity in Acholi creates a climate of instability in the country which in turn enables new insecurity to arise as in Kasese. If the Government works with the north, e.g. Acholi & Karamoja, they could prevent penetration by Sudan” (see chapter 11 below). With reference to government troops as well as to the LRA, an LRA supporter acknowledges “there have been atrocities committed in northern Uganda. But there seems to have been an international conspiracy to overlook these and then to consider it as a local insurgency. Yet it is a national crisis becoming an international crisis. The international community must look at the truth and avoid a tribal explanation and avoid a religious war explanation with references to being based on the Ten Commandments”. One LRA representative stated that the name “Lord’s Resistance Army” came about because the world turned a blind eye on atrocities and the fighters saw that “only God can reveal the truth”. The LRA undoubtedly feel isolated by the world community which has never responded to their case - “the British government has neglected the cries of Acholi and have responded with contemptuous replies”. They therefore need to build their confidence in the international community as they move towards an adequately monitored resolution.

As one elder put it: “If you want to catch a fish, you must put in some bait”. Therefore if the government wants a resolution, they must not frighten them with talk of how bad they are. When Kitgum District Council (LC5) had a discussion on reconciliation, they stressed the need to forget the past because they cannot get back the dead and need to deal with the futures of those who are alive now.

The Kitgum LC5 Chairman emphasises the need for any resolution to cover firstly an economic programme (see chapter 4 below) which is economically sound, for “if people have nothing, then no-one cares about security” and secondly the re-integration of those in the bush, especially economically (see chapter 7 below). It was also pointed out that it would be damaging if statements are made which raise hope and then fail to deliver.

An officer in the LRA has in writing questioned what is seen as so wrong with the Acholi that the Government does not treat them as children of Uganda and so talk to them as it did with Juma Oris of the West Nile Bank Front. The same writer noted that there were members of the former UPDA who were not interested in an end to the war because of financial interests and that they should not be informed of what is being done to resolve the problem as they would seek to undermine any resolution. The thrust of this fighter’s position is that the war can and should be ended shortly. That it has not ended reflects the need for a sufficiently wide-ranging approach to create a full resolution, short of which the LRA is capable and willing to continue fighting. This appears to be the view of commanders of the LRA,

recognising that only a broad resolution will prevent dialogue from failing to deliver peace. Failure would play into the hands of the few individuals opposing the Acholi consensus for selfish personal ends. The same officer expressed concern that “liars” should not be included in the delegates to any discussions. This echoes Kony’s own warning in 1994 to “guard against double-dealers” when stating that “bullets, arrows and pangas have failed”.

A leading Acholi woman considered that women are more outspoken than men and referred to the Women’s Peace March in 1989 where they had challenged both the LRA to permit children to go to school without fear and challenged the government as to its policy of burning granaries. She objected strongly to the use of child soldiers, but noted that this appears to copy the NRA use of child soldiers in Luwero. As mothers they present a different perspective and feel that they should have a role in any talks for peace.

At the formal level, both the Government of Uganda and the LRA/M have responded positively to the resolutions of the April 1997 Kacoke Madit meeting in London. The Director General of the External Security Organisation has written to the International Coordinator of KM: “I would like to assure you that once we hear from the LRA, we will respond appropriately as requested of us by resolution no4 of KM conference” (see Appendix No 2).

As one Acholi MP noted, the traditional approach of Acholi is not to write anything, but, if one agrees, to state it openly and to stand and forgive. There is an over-riding need in Acholi to find consensus. To be effective any dialogue which will last with regard to Acholi must be based on seeking consensus and not on negotiating towards a paper agreement. “Culturally, conflict is always resolved through discussion and whatever is agreed is then respected and accepted” stated a political analyst.

The use of FM radio, currently only available in Gulu, to reach the fighters in the bush was emphasised not only by government supporters but by those who oppose the government. However, there is a “need to use wise words, not to provoke”.

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**2 (a) A relevant UN agency should be invited to approach the LRA in order to arrange to visit their camps in Sudan to assess humanitarian needs.**

**2 (b) The LRA could further enhance the environment for a peaceful resolution by scaling down its activities.**

**2 (c) The LRA could facilitate a peaceful resolution by totally avoiding human rights violations against civilians.**

**2 (d) It could help if the Government of Uganda increasingly makes public statements which prepare the ground for comprehensive dialogue for peace and reconciliation.**

**2 (e) A bureaucratic Western approach to negotiations and bargaining which result in pen agreements worth only the paper on which they are written should be avoided and a culturally appropriate dialogue reaching a sustainable binding consensus on peace, reconciliation and development should be facilitated.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 3

#### TALKING POSITIVELY

“There has been either foolish or deliberate marginalisation of Acholi. The “policy” of marginalisation followed false accusations against Acholi” - Makerere academic

#### ***3. Talks Agenda - Reversing Sense Of Alienation Of Acholi***

- 3.1 public admissions by government of any excesses/failures
- 3.2 positive communications from government concerning Acholi which have an impact on whole of Uganda, including accurate history avoiding ethnic scapegoating, (especially avoiding blaming the Acholi for Luwero rather than multi-ethnic UNLA under authority of multi-ethnic government and army leaders)
- 3.3 action (such as appointing a credible/able Acholi of whatever political views to significant government position)
- 3.4 building trust by sustained credible actions and statements
- 3.5 influencing press towards a positive attitude & affirming positive attributes of Acholi, e.g.:
  - 3.5.1 cultural opposition to corruption
  - 3.5.2 not easily “bought”
  - 3.5.3 independent thinking and outspokenness
  - 3.5.4 loyalty without sycophancy/flattery

#### **REBUILDING TRUST**

As one Acholi in a senior government position put it, “there is a need for re-building trust”. Another repeated this common theme of the “need to re-establish trust” and that “the government misunderstood Acholi people and vice-versa” and that government saw the 1986 war as “being between the Acholi and the Government which it was not” as it was “arranged between the UNLA and politicians, not the

elders”. Thia agrees with Government views that the Acholi people and the Government have not been at war.

The fact that Gulu and Kitgum, arguably the most affected by the 1997 drought quite apart from the food production consequences of insecurity and the “protected villages” policy, had been excluded from the Prime Minister’s recent letter to USAID appealing for US\$20m support for unspecified food requirements and unspecified programmes in 16 severely affected districts, further stimulates the Acholi view that they are being marginalised by government and left to their own suffering. The position is felt to be mutual. “There is a lack of confidence - of the people in the government and of the government in the people”.

“The press must be addressed in terms of attitudes towards Acholi suggesting support for Kony. They are publishing lies which engender insecurity”. Yet an Acholi MP considers that “the Government now admits that ordinary people in Acholi have not supported rebellion”. Indeed one of the most senior Government ministers claims that “Kony’s survival has never depended on popular support of Acholi”, but that it has its own momentum with Sudanese support.

While some Acholi remark that there is “a loss of trust in the person of the President”, others claim that the President is personally sensitive to the suffering of the Acholi and that he understands the Acholi. Many Acholi are willing to accept the President as a “father” of the nation who seeks to protect all groups and recognise their needs and strengths.

The Nairobi Peace Accord of 1985 is often cited as the base of the climate of mutual mistrust. The history of formal and informal agreements or understandings between Acholi and the NRM and their breaches, such as Acholi claims to contacts before the July 1985 overthrow of Obote II when the NRM were in the bush, Dec ’85/Jan ’86, or the 1988 Pece agreement or the 1990 Addis agreement form the backcloth against which any current initiative is viewed by Acholi. “If an Acholi says *No* or *Yes*, then he must not go back on it”. An Acholi opinion leader generally critical of the NRM considers that “the mistrust of the President has been overcome by the Acholi, but that he does not believe that he has been forgiven”. Another Acholi sympathetic to the NRM recognises the President’s view that it was the other parties, not the NRM, who failed to deliver the terms of the 1985 and the 1990 agreements, evidencing the continuing provision of accommodation for the now elderly Otema Alimadi. The underlying theme from Acholi is that the time is ripe for re-building mutual trust with the past put behind.

## HISTORY AND MYTH

Many review the past history and compare it with official presentations of events. “The Acholi did not support the Luwero war. Those in the army fulfilled orders. Acholi soldiers were dying and Obote did not care. That led to a loss of confidence in Obote. It was not the plan of Acholi to lead Uganda, but to create peace and the Bazilio Okello coup seemed like the solution. But Museveni let down the Acholi”. “Acholi has been marginalised for a concept which is not true - namely that the Acholi were in power. In fact they were in the army, operating under orders”. Until an accurate picture of the Luwero war is encouraged by the government, it is obviously difficult for Acholi to acknowledge the part of individual Acholi lest they appear to be accepting total responsibility for actions of many parties in Uganda, including the NRA.

Targetting one group has clearly restricted Uganda’s ability to heal the past and at the same time has stripped the Acholi of any “dignity”. “When Acholi in high-ranking positions come, they criticise the elders for talking reconciliation because this is an issue for the whole country as the events were part of an act of war”. “There is no more reason for Acholi to reconcile with others than any other group”. However, the Acholi appear to be ready to risk leading Uganda in a process of total reconciliation and healing such as has never before been seen in the region. Many recognise the risk in doing so of being again scapegoated as those solely responsible. As the full truth emerges, it is easier for the Acholi elders to acknowledge the offences of individual Acholi soldiers acting without the support of their community, and to hope that those from other parts of Uganda will be encouraged equally to apologise. The Government has a parallel problem when it has acknowledged that some individual NRA/UPDF soldiers have committed atrocities, while not accepting responsibility in policy terms for their actions.

The Acholi widely wish to disengage from being recruited into the army in which under-development and British recruitment policy had trapped them. Even the LRA army commander at the 1994 talks said that “Before I was born, during colonial rule, Acholi were recruited into the army and as a result find themselves taking the blame. We do not want this to happen any more. With this reconciliation gathering we want to settle in such a way that in future Acholi will not be blamed for any official atrocities committed by the national army”. Indeed a key Government Minister has suggested that about 30,000 Acholi had been taken into the current UPDF, a prospect which alarms many Acholi.

The Acholi found themselves heavily over-represented in the UNLA because they refused to accept the Amin regime and the majority of ordinary people in exile were then moved to Tanzania and recruited and trained for armed overthrow of the Amin regime. Moreover, Acholi militia who took Kitgum even before the fall of Kampala and later the militia recruited to defend Acholi from the newly armed Karamojong raiders were later added to the UNLA and ordered to fight in Luwero and later in West Nile without being formally enlisted, never being added to the records except as “N.Y.A.” - “not yet approved”. The highest ranking Acholi in the field in Luwero was Major Kilama, who was only in the field for 6 months before being moved, and Captain Odwar who remained at headquarters in Bombo. Obote’s Defence Council “which formulated policy and procedures, contained not one Acholi” and his most feared ministers responsible for security were from Ankole.

The UNLA after 1979 was in Acholi eyes a disorganised army, inadequately trained and with an army commander, Oyite-Ojok from Lango, who spent too much time in his other role of Chair of the Coffee Marketing Board, and with officers in Luwero who concentrated on collecting coffee for personal gain. With the introduction of looting to Uganda as liberating forces ravaged Masaka and Mbarara and with weakness at the centre reflected in weak battalions, the multi-ethnic UNLA rapidly became an oppressive force.

Once the NRA began the bush war, they “sought to divide the army and therefore targetted Acholi, creating the view that Acholi were killing in Luwero and using a lot of propaganda warfare”. “Acholi were made the scapegoat in order to generate Baganda support for the NRA, but why continue after coming to power”. Early in the Luwero war, an Acholi administrator in Luwero who gave a report to the President’s Office that there needed to be peace negotiations was consequently transferred out of the area, because Obote refused to consider negotiations.

The Acholi had no “warrior tradition” up to the last century, unlike Buganda with its standing army and navy or the Karamojong with their warrior age-sets. Far from being “genetically violent”, reportedly the misquoted opinion of Brigadier Kazini, Acholi traditionally “fear blood and responsibility for killing - *alii* (“to make the first offence” or “to commit crime”)”. To a culture as in Buganda, where children are early taught a polite conversational style which does not reveal feeling or opinion, the Acholi combination of outspokenness and high levels of employment in the army are a fearful prospect which have lent themselves to unscrupulous ethnic politicians employing racist language such as “beasts” or “*anyanya*” (= “scorpions”, the name given to the Southern Sudanese rebel army in the 1960s). It was

said that by 1970 “there were 10,000 registered guns in Acholi used for hunting, yet no record of any Acholi being arrested for misuse of a gun or for murder using a gun”.

“There has been an unnecessary introduction of ethnic divisions. There had been the beginning of integration between Acholi and Ankole, with herdsmen from Ankole working in Acholi leading to intermarriage and also soldiers intermarrying. Intellectual Baganda see the Luwero atrocities as UNLA, not Acholi. They are using propaganda to isolate a small section of the UNLA and make them liable for Luwero. This focus on Acholi is because the Acholi are politically ahead in understanding the country, able to link across the country and a sophisticated community politically. Therefore they wanted to cut that political base which offered a threat to the NRM” is the view of a senior government official in Kampala.

### STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

While the government from a political point of view can seek support in Acholi and Acholi as individuals can argue their personal views, “as a people they cannot be forced to have a common view”. As Acholi identity is tied up with the concept of being “a chief in my own house”, **the only route in Acholi to a common view is through consensus based on free debate and argument.** Maintaining Acholi identity does not allow for the use of force nor the use of authoritarian domination to impose the will of “leaders” on the people. It is this approach to consensus leadership which leads so many southerners to quote that “the Acholi leaders have failed them”.

The problem lies in a different conception of leadership - from within as in Acholi or from above as in some other areas. Even Samuel Baker, 125 years ago, is said to have initially thought that the Acholi lacked a leader because of their consensus approach. Eventually he recognised that the kind of leadership required in Acholi is one that understands the nature of people and listens to what they say. No wonder some claim that the Acholi most closely resemble the ideal type society originally promulgated in NRM philosophy. As Okot p’Bitek once wrote: “Dictators and tyrants hate Acholi because they laugh and sing”.

It is frequently argued that it is difficult for governments to manipulate Acholi by financial means, whereas “buying” votes is reported in the Uganda press as occurring in many areas. “Vote-buying leadership is a serious threat in Uganda”. Therefore, governments in Uganda have always had to seek

Acholi support by conviction. The destruction of the morale of Acholi is seen to be making them insignificant. **The battle for the hearts and minds of Acholi cannot possibly be achieved by military means.** It therefore becomes a test of national leaders to win that battle and the consequence is a foundation for stability which has repercussions for the whole of Uganda.

“The government should avoid negative statements on Acholi” and “the government should be seen not to subscribe to hostile propaganda”. A widely expressed view, by supporters of the NRM as much as by supporters of the LRA, is that the Acholi need to be recognised by the NRM leadership for their strengths. An Acholi seen as close to the NRM politically, observed that “Museveni and his southern friends are now becoming aware of the fact that Acholi are very clever and among the highest educated in Uganda in the past. Inwardly, Museveni knows the Acholi are intelligent but publicly states the opposite. The Acholi were targetted so as to get Baganda support in order to achieve goals, but now the Baganda know that they are used. Museveni frequently passed into Acholi in the 1970s (sic! - only one such clandestine visit is recorded in the President’s own autobiography) to recruit Acholi against Amin and acknowledges that once Acholi respect you they will do anything for you. Museveni personally has a liking for Acholi, but he failed to communicate this to those around him because of his ambitions”. Such views are frequently expressed that the President personally relates well to Acholi, but that there is a southern culture of disdain towards the Acholi, as a product of traditional ethnic politics.

Yet others view the problem as a result of personal intransigence. Some questioned the ability of the President to take on new ideas and so create an environment for peace. “President Museveni is unable to make a U-turn to create a new environment”. Some exiles view that “Acholi cannot smile or relax while Museveni is President of Uganda”, believing that the President should account for the war and explain what has been happening in Uganda and elsewhere. This perspective sees the President as nominally responsible for the Kony rebellion as a result of the environment created by the NRM, on the grounds that a President should always take responsibility for the actions of those under him - equally for Obote with regard to Luwero. Some claim that the Kony phenomenon is a creation of the government in the sense of providing a focus and a justification for the continuing disparagement of Acholi.

All such expressions reflect a questioning by Acholi as to why the war persists in spite of their opposition to it. The Acholi look for the President to take the initiative to bring people together across ethnic divides and for the government to build foundations for a future in which ethnic divisions are overcome and all co-operate for a common prosperity. “If you consider a peasant farmer in Acholi and another in Ankole and another in Buganda, what enmity can there be between these? How can one feel

threatened by another, unless political groups or those holding power in government generate these fears? In towns there may be inter-ethnic tensions, yet in Gulu and Kitgum, those of other ethnic groups have always been welcomed. Even during Amin's rule (in which Acholi suffered so much) many prominent people from elsewhere settled in Gulu and Kitgum".

"The Government needs to appoint leaders in Gulu & Kitgum who are credible and do not simply echo the words of the UPDF commanders in order to keep in with them". This Acholi aversion to flatterers and sycophants is often summarised in conversations with the Acholi saying of "*Rwot ineka kinyero*" - or "chief, you are killing me with laughter", meaning that "I love what you are saying". Acholi frequently say how they hate such attitudes, which they consider to be damaging to leaders who need to be told the truth even when unpalatable.

There are many statements of the failure of government to appoint a credible Acholi to a key ministerial position. This is expressed not as a wish to have political influence, in the sense that the political views of such a person are not seen as important, but rather as an affirmation of the contribution that able Acholi can make for the good of the whole country. It would represent a significant inclusion of Acholi into the corridors of power.

### ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

While the international community has highlighted the known atrocities committed by the LRA, including arbitrary killings, abductions, rape, mutilations and forcing children to become both perpetrators and victims in these, it is widely understood that the NRA/UPDF must also give account for its own excesses, less apparent, such as burning houses, looting cattle and property, and various extra-judicial killings over the years. There are also suggestions that the SPLA may have been acting as *agents provocateurs* in copying the LRA in abducting children, but there is no substantive evidence to this effect. It is thought that the government may seek to set the record straight with its own admissions before the expected end-of-the-year publication of the Amnesty International report on the UPDF which will complement its August report on the LRA atrocities. This would put positive pressure on the LRA to face up to its own responsibility, creating an environment in which reconciliation can occur.

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultation:**

**3 (a) The Government could help by using its influence to accelerate the trend towards putting the record straight with regard to Acholi in the interests of reconciliation and national unity.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 4

#### INVESTING IN PEACE

“The colonialists marginalised some parts of the country, including northern Uganda. ... What anyone interested in the north should say is that the area has never been developed” - Yoweri Museveni 1997 p 211 ff.

#### **4. Talks Agenda - Economic Programme for self-reliance & development:**

##### **4.1 institutional and family rehabilitation**

4.1.1 rapid rural appraisal to assess community-based projects - enhancing current Gulu programme utilising *Rwodi kaka*, *Rwodi kweri* & *Rwodi mon*

4.1.2 ensure all households have basic equipment

4.1.3 oxen & ox-plough programme

4.1.4 programmes to rehabilitate infrastructure:

4.1.4.1 communications: roads, rail, telephones in trading centres & FM radio stations

4.1.4.2 health services

4.1.4.3 schools (highest priority to restore previous Acholi educational levels) n.b. ~ 300 teachers killed

4.2 **long-term strategic development programme** to invest in Acholi agriculture & processing, providing opportunity to demystify “martial race” myth

4.2.1 boosting Acholi traditional cereal and oil-seed potential

4.2.2 re-stocking requiring border security

#### ECONOMIC INVESTMENT LINKED TO RECONCILIATION

“We must give hope to the people and prospects of a future for the rebels”.

“There is a loss of hope in the future and the sense of the meaning of life. People need to restore self-confidence in themselves and create hope. To support this hope, there must be tangible programmes with

which people identify”. According to a returnee, the LRA would wish to “produce a lasting solution to economic problems, but worry that if we fail to overthrow the government, what will the future be in Acholi”. The possibility of LRA support for a programme creating economic prosperity offers one route for their future mutual co-operation with the proposals now being developed by both the Government and the people of Acholi.

**The thrust of discussions over international aid and economic programmes was that there is a potential for aid to be used not only for economic ends, but almost more importantly, to be a means to reconciliation by being passed primarily through normal government channels, but also in part through individual rebel returnee hands as compensation for wrongs, thereby achieving reconciliation in the process of disbursement.**

Compensation by individuals (see chapters 7 & 8 below) would be presented to the clan elders and then compensation by the clan elders would be presented to the Districts for investment in schools, or similar, in memory of those who have died. A similar action has been proposed by Government for the 47 who were suffocated to death in 1989 in a railway wagon in Kumi in which 300 men had been crammed by NRA soldiers. The Vice-President pledged in 1994 to build a secondary school and a monument in honour of the victims.

“The spirits of dead people would forgive if something was built dedicated to them - also it acts a reminder to the living” (see chapters 8 & 9).

It is hoped that one of the major donors would recognise the significance of enabling funds to be a means towards the end of reconciliation as well as funding a programme of value in itself. However, one aid administrator suggests that it might be difficult for a donor to consider giving cash for compensation because of the question of accountability. In his view the Government of Uganda could look after the cash element while the donor provided the main funds for, say, school buildings onto which the compensation element could be “bolted on”. Such an approach would dilute the effect of the “memorial” symbol.

The local authorities must establish transparent and assured collection methods which are publicly accountable and can guarantee the collection of compensation and in turn the building of facilities to agreed specifications. As a consequence, it could be that the end product could be more accountable, with a lower risk of fund diversion, and more truly “owned” by the community than comparable school

building programmes elsewhere in Uganda. With the current Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme, Gulu and Kitgum are lagging far behind other districts and even their own levels before the current insecurity.

### CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE INVESTMENT

At the secondary level, the once leading school of Sir Samuel Baker School outside Gulu is like a ghost school with its hall burnt down and buildings in total disrepair. Given its historic significance to the Acholi, built by the District Administration out of second-world war demobilisation funds, and as the leading school in the north through which many well-known Acholi professionals passed, it would make a significant symbolic focus for rehabilitation.

The same extensive site outside Gulu has been earmarked by the government for a new **University of Gulu**. Acholi have been sceptical of the Government's commitment to this project and feelings are ambivalent towards it as few Acholi can now access higher education due to the collapse of the education system within Gulu and Kitgum. Almost all secondary schools have re-located in theory to the towns, but only about 25% of pupils have been able to afford to move with their school. Gulu and Kitgum, which by 1969, had one of the highest levels of education in the country (Acholi males being proportionately second only to the West Mingo area around Kampala at all levels of Primary, Secondary and University education - see "Beyond Crisis" 1987 page 51) now send less undergraduates to Makerere University than a single county in Bushenyi. There is some interest, in principle supported by an M.P. who is an academic, for a practice-orientated university which might offer open university courses partly by correspondence and use of FM radio particularly to those in the north, and possibly southern Sudan, who have missed out on further education opportunities. Such an approach could redress the sense of grievance in the area at the collapse of tertiary educational opportunity which will have long-term effects for at least a generation within an increasingly competitive educational environment nationally.

Acholi are generally protective of any community facilities. It is notable that the LRA have not targetted permanent infrastructure, only grass-thatched schools, and have left untouched, for example, new schools on the Kitgum-Lira road built by the Australia-Uganda Foundation. Health Centres have been targetted only for their drugs and equipment. Potential British aid support for health centre rehabilitation would stress the community "possession" of this type of facility. As with other aspects of an economic programme, there is a question of capacity building to effect local management of programmes and facilities. Work needs to be done to determine ways of establishing community involvement in

rehabilitation which will enhance community confidence and not lead to conflict, accusations and destruction of community morale.

There are examples of both good and bad practice from post-war Luwero from 1986 which can be drawn on. Acord and Oxfam have particularly good records in this regard both locally in Acholi and nationally. From 1979, when Acholi was faced with the worst infrastructural collapse of any area in Uganda, as a result of being targeted by Amin, Acord established a credible programme particularly in health working with local communities and traditional birth attendants and herbalists. The programme of rehabilitation by Oxfam in Luwero after the war was carried out through local councils so successfully that these councils moved with confidence to developing their own community programmes. The Oxfam post-war Luwero programme offers a model for a similar programme of self-sufficiency kits for Acholi [see proposal 4.m.1].

A delicate balance needs to be struck by donors and Government between use of established and reputable international NGOs, the best of which employ mostly excellent national staff, and the use of developing national or local NGOs or use of the district authorities. In West Nile, the British are looking at developing indigenous NGO capacity, working through a British-based NGO. There are some hands-on interventionist international NGOs whose style of operation in project management tends to alienate local co-operation and weaken indigenous capacity, as well as examples of less than transparent financial administration with low capacity to deliver resources to the intended beneficiaries. On account of these infrastructural weaknesses at this time, the RDC Gulu would like to see major donors placing their own coordinator in the area in order to monitor delivery and accountability. Any British aid programme is likely to contract such a role to an NGO. “Both international teams and local teams must be of the highest calibre - able to confront corruption, political division and individual interests”.

One strength of Acholi society is the existence of an unrecognised grass-roots traditional structure of leaders influencing agricultural production and land use, women’s affairs and community decision-making. This is quite separate from the elected local councils introduced by the government which closely parallel traditional structures. The latter are very weak since many of those elected in 1986 were early targets of the rebels and so the Acholi are widely reported at the next elections to have deliberately elected weak representatives who were “expendable” rather than those they respected. A similar trend was noted in Teso during its period of insecurity. It is yet to be seen what calibre of representatives are elected in the forthcoming elections.

There are several traditional roles throughout Acholi society. With regard to the *Rwot kaka* see chapter 8. The *Rwot kweri* (or “hoe chief”) at the village level of the sub-clan has continued unrecognised by the Department of Agriculture, but is still respected for his advice on crops and planting as well as with regard to use of fallow land and as the community leader at the village level. The *Rwot mon* or *lawii mon* (“chief of the women” or “women’s leader”) is recognised by the women of the village as representing the interests of women who by custom must all have married into the clan from outside - marriage within clans being prohibited. The voice of women is traditionally heard in community discussions, although women’s status, particularly as controllers of the household economy, has been arguably severely lowered compared with pre-colonial days. The *Rwot mon*, as an older respected “elder” of the women, carries considerably more respect than the recently elected women’s representative on an LC. Acord’s programme in Gulu District through the early 1980s worked extensively with these traditional leaders and achieved more in this way than had been achieved by colonial or post-Independence governments which avoided these institutions. For example, the Agriculture Department had always taken a directive approach to command production of cash crops such as cotton and tobacco, seeking to go direct to the farmers and failing to generate any meaningful participation or development.

### PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

In Gulu District there are 396 villages grouped into 116 parishes within 19 sub-counties (plus divisions in Gulu Municipality) and 4 counties (plus Gulu Municipality). In Kitgum District there are 132 parishes within 20 sub-counties (plus divisions in Kitgum Municipality) and 4 counties (plus Kitgum Municipality). The total rural population of Gulu and Kitgum in 1991 was 736,000 (with about 53,000 urban residents) in approximately 123,000 rural households.

The RDC Gulu, Peter Odok, is working through the traditional village level leaders, within their sphere of competence and function, asking them to come up with **village level micro-projects**. These will be summarised in a booklet detailing the economic programmes which each village would like to undertake. Donors will be invited to support this programme through the District Administration, but with access direct to the villages for monitoring against objectives and costs. This is designed to ensure that funds reach the intended village beneficiaries and are not diverted at District or national levels. A comparable approach is being considered in Kitgum by the Church of Uganda Diocesan Development Officer, who is

an advocate of participatory rural needs assessment techniques and aims to work closely with colleagues from the Catholic Church and the District Administration.

There is a need to review proposals in relation to current levels of infrastructural support, such as administrative or veterinary, and to carry out **capacity building support** programmes to ensure non-corrupt handling of programmes at central and district levels. NGOs, whether international or national, are viewed favourably by donors and this receives support in the Districts, provided that they meet the necessary standards of transparency, accountability and professional quality. Unfortunately one international NGO has evidently failed the basic test of transparency and accountability and this creates a vacuum in terms of effective implementation. There are also outstanding national leaders among the NGOs in particular.

With both the local administration and organisations co-operating on determining an economic programme for rehabilitation and development, it should be noted that the LRM claim also to be working on a development proposal for Gulu and Kitgum to improve productivity, with reference to roads and telephones, tractors and mills, rice promotion, cement and gas development in Lokung and Parai, and water harvesting and irrigation. Such proposals at least show the potential for co-operation for future development as an outcome of any resolution.

The current elected representatives in Gulu and Kitgum at all levels from LC1 to LC5 are seen by Acholi as generally weak, ineffectual and potentially corrupt, with a few exceptions. Several commented that new people would have to be elected to ensure non-corrupt administration of any aid/development programme. The dilemma for Acholi is that their response to the elections due at the end of 1997 will depend on the predicted security situation as to their outcome in terms of effective leadership. At this time Acholi “need strong LC5 membership”. The LC3 level also has significant powers and resources, since 65% of tax raised is kept at the LC3 level, with 35% passing up to the LC5 level.

As part of the decentralisation programme, the Ministry of Local Government has established a successful unit which focusses on capacity building for micro-project identification and management, particularly at the LC3 level. The unit has produced handbooks and guidelines and forms to assist in managing schemes such as boreholes and protected springs. This unit might be asked to address the question of capacity-building in Gulu and Kitgum. “Communication and information is critical. It is important that full details of value of inputs, quantity of materials, quality & specification of work is communicated to the community in order that they can monitor inputs”. The RDC Gulu is looking for

some umbrella organisation which can offer courses in management as well as providing an overall monitoring role.

### LINK BETWEEN EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE & LIVESTOCK

**Education** is seen by Acholi as the pre-requisite for higher personal incomes from better jobs and the foundation for future development. As such it is given the highest priority in economic programmes - above health centres and above agriculture. Indeed agriculture is seen as a source of income to pay for education - as well as providing a balanced diet for good health. A generation of educated Acholi is being lost which will have repercussions for the next 50 years. In addition to the loss of schooling due to schools being transferred to towns without most of their pupils, the collapse of the economy in Acholi means that families cannot afford secondary school fees.

It is said that if the LRA had wanted to destroy buildings, they could easily have done so, although they have destroyed some commercial buildings in trading centres such as Padibe, Lokung and Atanga. Nor has the work of NGO's been targetted. Informants suggest that even now, before a peace settlement, government and donors could continue to repair permanent school buildings.

The Government has been willing to consider **re-stocking** in Acholi to compensate for the 98% of the 285,000 cattle taken in 1987 by the NRA, mostly in Gulu, and by Karamojong raiders, mostly in Kitgum, and estimated to value US\$25 million (Gersony p27). This loss of capital and income, together with lost agricultural production due to insecurity and displacement, has been compounded by the loss of possibly 10,000 Acholi jobs in the army when the NRA defeated the UNLA (see Gersony p15) and the discrimination against Acholi in the Kampala national job market (often referring to Acholi as "Anyanya" - the Sudanese predecessors to the current SPLA), and by "retrenchment" from government posts affecting Acholi at least in proportion to their over-representation in the civil service. Cumulatively, this represents a staggering economic price which Acholi feel they are continuing to pay. From a base-line of under-development their current impoverishment confirms the trend, begun under colonial rule, continued under the Obote and Amin regimes, and accelerated under the present Government and Structural Adjustment Programmes, of creating two economies - north and south. Insecurity has prevented the donor community from addressing this inherited imbalance.

The Government's willingness to inject capital into Acholi through a partial re-stocking programme is welcomed by Acholi both for its value and for its compensation aspect which facilitates reconciliation. It is said that when the Prime-Minister once visited Gulu, Acholi told him that "no cows will mean no votes" to which he is said to have responded that "no votes will mean no cows". The Government's first attempt to initiate re-stocking was terminated due to mal-administration, with one businessman who reportedly never had cattle receiving 200 head. The District Administration is currently collating from veterinary records an accurate picture of pre-looting cattle ownership. The Prime Minister recently said that government would give some cattle and loans, but not full compensation. **From the point of view of reconciliation, acceptance of responsibility with apology and compensation is viewed as being more important than replacing the full number of cattle.** An ox-plough and two oxen per household, somewhat below the value of the actual loss, would solve the problem, suggested some. However, others more realistically felt that such an ox-team donated to groups of 9 households, costing about US\$6m, would go a long way to restoring hope and agricultural production, even at only 25% of the loss value. "Rather than replacement, Government should seek to re-empower Acholi with an economic programme at community level, but programmes should be demand-driven from the community not service-driven".

The Church of Uganda in Kitgum started a project early in 1997 in which oxen and an ox-plough have been distributed to units of 5 households, covering 5 units in each of 5 parishes (i.e. affecting 125 households in total). After 2 years each unit must purchase 2 more oxen and an ox-plough to pass on in the same way. The contract states that the ox-team is not the households' property until the passing-on part of the contract has been fulfilled. The programme management operates a form of insurance cover out of an initial down payment from each unit which is available for emergencies such as death of an ox. An earlier programme of oxen and ox-ploughs for widows broke down due to insecurity. Were such an NGO programme to require recipients to pass on two such ox-team units before fulfilling their contract, there would be a built-in pyramidal growth.

Re-stocking requires security between Acholi and Karamoja. With restoration of security in Acholi, the government would be in a position to re-locate units to the Karamoja borders. The new amnesty law and possible use of traditional conflict resolution might be of assistance in Karamoja in ending raiding. However the border with Sudan also needs to be secured and the existing two open markets, at Agoro and at Rom, reportedly trading guns near the Sudan border need to be controlled. Children in Karamoja are said to be currently provided with guns to be stored until they become warriors.

Suggestions for a post-resolution **ox-team programme** of two oxen and an ox-plough for every 9 households is calculated to cost \$6.2m. The assumptions are based on the population for Gulu and Kitgum of 736,000 rural and 53,000 established urban residents. At an average of 6 persons per household (the assumption of the immunisation programmes), this would imply a total of 13,630 ox-units @ £300 per team of 2 oxen and an ox-plough. These could be distributed through the *Rwot kweri*, rather than the local administration or agricultural extension workers in order to have credible community accountability. Such a programme would do more than any other to boost economic recovery in the area.

“In the past **agriculture** was central and cash-crops provided income. But there is a loss of confidence in planting cotton. For a cash crop, the market must be available”. What is lacking in Gulu and Kitgum is any vertically integrated market for any crop. The Co-operatives have totally collapsed. Traders have been effective in marketing some crops for which there is high demand in the south, particularly rice from Pabbo and neighbouring areas, which has become the main cash-crop in Gulu District.

In pre-colonial days, women controlled the household economy and in particular the granaries which were their total responsibility and into which no man was ever permitted to look. With the imposition of colonial rule and the poll tax imposed only on men in order to force them to produce for the colonial economy, women were marginalised in the economic sphere. Any economic development programme now needs to take account of women’s views and should restore their role. Generally in Acholi, women are consulted and their opinions respected. Effectively, “women have the veto in the sense that their view is reasonable and truthful, but it is over-ruled if speaking out of jealousy”.

### INTERNATIONAL DONOR SUPPORT

All the major donors currently express an interest in seeing a settlement in the north both for humanitarian reasons and for the sake of development, which is recognised to be stagnant where not in decline, and from an historic base-line well below the south of Uganda. The international community is concerned at the increasing trend for Uganda to develop into “two countries” - a prosperous south and an under-resourced and undeveloped north.

The **major international donors** report that significant new funds would be made available following a peace settlement which is clearly sustainable. The Government of Uganda will need to negotiate dynamically if the total donor contribution is to exceed about US \$ 25m. Danish and British aid programmes are reported to be currently the largest bi-lateral donors nationally, at about US \$ 60-70m

per annum, followed by USAID at about \$55m. The EU's 5-year funding comes up for review shortly and will have a geographical emphasis on the north.

The President has apparently asked the Minister for the North to prepare a paper for the EU on re-stocking, for which the RDC Gulu is now collecting accurate records to avoid corrupt claims such as the Kenyan who received massive "compensation" in the earlier maladministered programme. The proposal has been for the EU to provide money for in-country purchases, particularly Zebu and cross-breeds from Nakasongola, Tororo and Lango rather than Busoga. The Cornerstone project near Nakasongola has developed its own Zebu-Friesian cross-breed with high milk yields and suitability for the northern Uganda environment. There is concern expressed about southern Ugandan and Ministry attempts to divert resources intended for the north, such as a recent attempt to divert 18 of the first 30 Friesians given to the District by the Uganda Veterans Assistance Board under Maj Gen Emilio Mondo. Some limited re-stocking is already occurring through the open market, particularly in the south-western parts of Kitgum.

Potential donor interest and broad policy parameters for an economic programme as part of the resolution of the conflict are reported on in Appendix No 6. It is the view of the RDC Gulu that there should be "strong firm co-ordination of aid from donor countries to ensure good administration".

#### INVESTMENT BY ACHOLI IN DIASPORA

The targetting of educated Acholi by the Amin regime in the 1970s led to a large exodus and since then the international Acholi community has acquired experience, often at high levels, in professional posts across Africa, in Australia and Papua New Guinea, America and Canada, Britain and Germany in particular. While professional, family and contractual commitments may not allow a quick return even with a total and sustainable resolution, it is hoped by many in Acholi that these members of the Acholi community will seek to contribute their resources of knowledge, experience and finance to development in Acholi and Uganda generally. This could be effected by partnerships or by short professional visits, such as with the support of the UN funded organisation "TOKTEN" ("Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals"). Such one month visits by specialists in computing, health or business could provide an important stimulus to development in the post-resolution phase.

## COSTS IN PERSPECTIVE

This interest in northern Uganda by the international donor community is likely to be relatively short-lived if there is a major sustainable settlement in Southern Sudan before a genuine settlement in northern Uganda. On the other hand the costs of an economic programme as a result of a resolution should be set against the continuing unproductive costs of supporting up to 180,000 internally displaced people in Gulu District and 116,000 in Kitgum District as of August 1997. The Kitgum District Disaster Relief Committee drew up a 6-month budget to meet the basic needs as well as resettlement needs of 53,000 displaced people, before that number doubled with increased insecurity in mid-1997. The budget reached US \$3.9m, covering food relief, water, sanitation, health, education and overall administration. The figure only included \$0.5m for resettlement items such as agricultural hand tools, seeds and insecticides. Most of these costs are being borne by the international community.

The costs of rehabilitating and reinvigorating the economy of Acholi, of the order of \$34m before being prioritised [see Recommendation 4(m)], need to be set in the context of the far greater current costs in military expenditure, with the Army Commander requesting an annual budget of \$240m (rejected by Parliament and the President) in order to end the war, apart from the costs of supporting displaced people. It also compares favourably with the loss of cattle valued at \$25m a decade ago. By giving an emphasis to the income-generating productive sector of peasant agriculture, there will be the potential for further re-investment in this area as well as sustaining the costs of education which is so highly prized in Acholi. It is unlikely that Parliament will continue to support requests for increased military expenditure rather than the lower costs of rehabilitation and development associated with the resolution of conflicts through consensus dialogue, especially given the universal demand of the affected people for such a solution supported by the international community.

### **For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**4 (a) The international donor community would make a major contribution to a resolution if it supported the use of aid as a means of reconciliation as well as for rehabilitation and development.**

**4 (b) The LC5s of Gulu and Kitgum should agree a transparent and corruption-proof method of collecting compensation and using it to establish a memorial primary school in every sub-county and in Aboke, together with two memorial centres for the disabled.**

**4 (c) The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with academics, particularly from the north, could consider preparing plans for an “Open University of Gulu” which will have appropriate accessibility for those excluded by circumstances from Makerere University.**

**4 (d) The voters in Gulu and Kitgum in forthcoming LC elections should be encouraged to recognise the long-term significance of electing strong councils to handle peace, reconciliation and development.**

**4 (e) The respective LC5s and RDCs of Gulu and Kitgum should urgently utilise rural participatory techniques to determine a portfolio of village-level micro-projects for collation and forwarding through Government to potential NGO and bi-lateral donors.**

**4 (f) The RDCs of Gulu and Kitgum should facilitate their respective LC5 in establishing rehabilitation and development priorities and determining realistic programmes within the parameters of potential donor interest.**

**4 (g) The Ministry of Local Government could consider directing its Programme Management Unit for World Bank/UNCDF Supported Projects to complete an urgent capacity-building programme at LC3 level in Gulu and Kitgum.**

**4 (h) The Government of Uganda might invite a training organisation to contract to provide courses in project management.**

**4 (i) Major donors should consider contracting an independent project coordinator to ensure quality delivery of relief and development inputs to the intended beneficiaries, working through local structures.**

**4 (j) Authentic district records should be established regarding loss of cattle 10 years ago on which Government might base a reasonable re-stocking programme in compensation.**

**4 (k) In tandem with any dialogue leading to peace and reconciliation, the Government of Uganda may wish to coordinate a meeting of potential donors to seek support for its programme of rehabilitation and long-term development for the area.**



<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$27.6m</b>
<b>Plus: balance of resettlement packages for returnees:</b>	<b>\$ 6.8m</b>

**4(n) The LRM are encouraged to associate their thinking on an economic programme for the future of Acholi with that of the Government of Uganda and Acholi representatives from Gulu and Kitgum.**

**4(o) Acholi in the diaspora are encouraged to contribute their knowledge, experience and finance in the development of Acholi and Uganda following a sustainable resolution.**

## **“THE BENDING OF SPEARS”**

### Chapter 5

#### MAINTAINING THE PEACE

##### **5. Talks Agenda - Guarantors:**

##### **5.1 at talks stage**

5.1.1 independent Chair

5.1.2 neutral observers

##### **5.2 at implementation stage** - requiring physical and moral force

5.2.1 monitoring demobilisation and amnesty - physical presence

5.2.1.1 international weapons collection team

5.2.1.2 international landmine clearance team

5.2.1.3 international training team for a new local police at sub-county level accountable to District Security Committee

5.2.2 **post-resolution** - moral authority involving

5.2.2.1 external monitoring presence such as international development NGO's

5.2.2.2 informal internal monitoring presence such as posting of non-Acholi professionals to both Districts

5.2.3 **institutional capacity** - e.g. Ugandan organisations such as UJCC Peace & Reconciliation Committee linked with international organisations

#### GUARANTEEING THE PEACE

During any talks, the LRA may seek to insist on neutral observers acting as guarantors and have indicated to possible convenors for talks, that the LRA would confirm attendance once the Americans and Europeans have agreed to take part.

A Ugandan political analyst suggests that “neutral monitoring would need to be strong initially, but the moral force of monitoring is important long-term. There is a need to have the physical and moral force

carefully worked out. All attempts at resolution through dialogue have failed because none have done it the correct way - just like a cat playing with a mouse. There has been no institutional capacity to make it stick”.

The question of guarantors is critical when Acholi review from their perspective their cumulative experiences of 1971 (post-Amin coup resulting in massacres of Acholi officers and soldiers who proffered loyalty in order to prevent civil war); 1985 (following their perception of contacts with the NRA in the bush were the Acholi to overthrow OboteII); 1985/86 (following the Nairobi Peace Agreement when the then government was said by the NRA to be importing fresh arms and failed to curtail indiscipline among the soldiers in the 3 weeks following the signing, leading to NRA breaches); 1988 (following the NRM/UPDA-internal wing agreement signed in Pece, Gulu, after which Acholi argue that some UPDA officers were killed). The hardliners, even in 1986, used history to discourage former soldiers from giving in their arms. “Many did hand in their guns willingly in early 1986 until the NRA began tying them up (“three-piece”) to be left in the sun”.

As an exile remembers: “From 1986 we got the impression that the NRA were coming to Acholi for punitive action and had an underlying agenda. There was a marching song of the NRA, which was even put on the radio - *when you reach Kumi, you bomb; when you reach Soroti, you bomb; when you reach Lira, you bomb; when you reach Gulu/Kitgum you burn completely*. Yet the NRA collected about 20,000 guns within 2 weeks handed in by former armed forces. But in about May 1986, they began arresting these former UNLA soldiers and some were killed. They locked some youths in a cotton store in Atanga and then shot randomly into the building until some were rescued by a group of former soldiers from outside”. This is said to have led to more refugees going to Sudan, most settling about 30 miles from the border and building houses and starting to cultivate, with the Sudanese government collecting in their weapons. The NRA are said to have organised the SPLA to over-run these unprotected camps of Acholi refugees as well as about 45 camps of West Nile and Nubian refugees in the Kit area, dating from 1979, which was aimed at dismantling camps outside Uganda and forcing refugees to return into Uganda.

“The agreement should not be unilaterally upheld. It needs international support from the big powers who influence the government. National monitoring in 1988 did not work”. An LRA view supports that “there need to be guarantors, not military, but non-Ugandan monitoring such as NGOs which are non-partisan, possibly having a primary aid purpose”. Guarantors would be needed at the talks stage and at the monitoring level. “There would not necessarily need to be any sanctions other than public embarrassment”.

### COMMUNITY POLICING

There seems to be only criticism of the current local police who are seen as corrupt and accountable to the army. The Local Defence Units (LDUs or “home guards”) come in for widespread criticism in Acholi where they are seen as a major problem and are blamed for some abuses. They are accused of being made up of “society’s drop-outs” and causing havoc by their ill-disciplined and unaccountable behaviour.

A suggestion at one meeting for a community police accountable to the District authorities (the District Security Committee) received general support at later meetings. It was felt that such police should be new recruits with a minimum of S6 level education, able to be trained in Kampala at Naguru, but also receiving training from an international team in community policing which should include training the District Security Committee in their responsibilities for such a force. Such a police force, totalling only about 110 officers in total over the two districts with two based in each sub-county at the LC3 level, would be a new direction for Uganda which would require executive approval at the national level. It would be an extension of the existing responsibilities for security at LC3 and LC5 levels and would allow the community to influence priorities for maintaining good order, not dissimilar from the principles of community policing now advocated in Britain or Denmark for example. Even at LC1 village level, there is a Secretary for Security who would be able to work closely with any properly accountable community police force, working with the national police. Some of these elected representatives dealing with security could be included in any training programme.

### ASSURING SAFETY

It was further suggested that the international training team would provide a significant contribution to the guarantor requirement, if the period of training could overlap with the resolution period. This might reassure both returning LRA fighters and international donors and NGOs. As one returnee saw it, the commanders are less afraid of remaining fighting in the bush where they have all survived for at least 4 years than they are of an unsecured resolution of the war. It was said that the LRA view is that once no Acholi are holding a gun, the Banyankole will utterly abuse Acholi. It is up to leaders from Ankole to reassure Acholi by their actions and statements that this fear is unreal.

A further suggestion was discussed in the field for an international landmine clearance team to assist the UPDF in clearing the mines planted on main roads and feeder roads as well as around infrastructural and military installations. This would provide further re-assurance to the population as the team moves around the districts during the immediate post-resolution stage.

Some expressed strong views that as part of the demilitarisation of the region, “guns when handed in should be destroyed - not re-used by government who will require less guns once this war is over”. There was a view that it would help if there were to be an international weapons collection team which would also have the responsibility for destroying the weapons collected, rather than allowing them to recirculate. The presence of such a team would further enhance the atmosphere of a protected environment during the resolution period.

As one observer put it, the Acholi need to be given a “buffer zone”, either militarily or in terms of adequate monitoring. Such monitoring needs to be effective, which a military unit open to manipulation and restrictions as to its terms of reference and “engagement” might not be. A more flexible presence on the ground of monitors who are also responsible for delivering aid to the community might be more effective with greater moral authority and freedom to act.

While it is clearly in the interests of the government to create as secure an environment as possible for a resolution, the added presence of these international teams, albeit fulfilling specific functions, but able to report any failures to the international community, would add weight to any reassurances being offered to the LRA fighters. It might also enable the government to discreetly re-deploy the UPDF forces to the northern international border and to the Karamoja border in order to ensure security for the economic programme, such as re-stocking.

#### EXTENDING THE REASSURANCE

The presence of international NGOs on the ground will reassure the people if these are recognised by government as having a role in monitoring the resolution. “There must be a clear brief on this in order not to disappoint the NGOs or the people in the light of past breaches. Otherwise the government distrusts the potential human rights and political role of NGOs”. This distrust was said to be based on the experience of some NGOs’ support for the NRA when themselves in the bush. By openly agreeing such a role, an area of potential mistrust can be turned into an area of mutual cooperation.

A leading Catholic priest expressed the view that the government fears the churches because of their speaking the truth, but that it was a failing of the churches that they insisted on working independently of the government. The churches have agreed to form a “Peace Movement Committee” which would be supported by World Vision in addition to the Uganda Joint Christian Council’s Peace & Reconciliation Unit, based in Kampala. There are also a number of peace groups based in Kampala, but their credibility is weakened by combinations of political associations and desire for funding programmes, with “training” and “workshops” as a justification.

The fragmentation of many reconciliation organisations leaves a requirement for one organisation to take the lead in acting as an umbrella body linking with international organisations as part of a non-governmental infrastructure which can provide an independent guardian of peace and reconciliation. This would be in synergy with the requirements enshrined in the constitution for every citizen to ensure constitutional stability and guarantees on human rights and to resist unconstitutional activities. One candidate for such a role might be the Uganda Joint Christian Council.

As part of the reincorporation of Acholi into the Uganda polity, some suggested that non-Acholi professionals should be appointed to posts in the area in order to prevent a possible repetition of the isolation of Acholi so that others in Uganda neither understood the Acholi people nor the situation in Acholi. This would need to be handled sensitively in order not to appear that with an end to the insecurity others were benefitting at the expense of Acholi. There is clearly a wider concern in Uganda within the overall policy of decentralisation to create a sense of national identity rather than the trends towards localisation with its inherent dangers of “ethnic cleansing” in employment terms. Several Acholi expressed strong views about the Acholi history of taking a national inter-ethnic perspective.

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**5 (a) The USA and Europe could be invited to offer their services as observers at any talks.**

**5 (b) The Districts of Gulu and Kitgum may wish to discuss with the Ministry of Internal Affairs the possibility of creating a community police force of about 110 officers for a limited pilot period.**

**5 (c) The USA or a European state, alone or in co-operation, might be approached to provide one or more of the following to work with the Ugandan authorities:**

- 1. weapons collection team**
- 2. landmine clearance team**
- 3. community police training team**

**5 (d) International NGOs invited by Government and donors to work in Gulu and Kitgum should be asked to liaise with any peace and reconciliation infrastructure as part of their legitimate brief in addition to their aid and development functions.**

**5 (e) The Uganda Joint Christian Council could evaluate its potential to become the main independent coordinating and umbrella body for the purposes of monitoring the peace in coordination with others.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 6

#### CLEARING THE GUILT

##### ***6. Talks Agenda - Resolution Of Offences/Amnesty***

- 6.1 clarification of amnesty for offences against state
- 6.2 providing time-bound traditional penalties for confessed offences under *Rwodi-mo & Lodito kaka* without breaching requirements of the constitution
- 6.3 traditional resolution of offences given legal validity if necessary through Act of Parliament
- 6.4 national applicability, not specific to Acholi situation
- 6.5 potentially approved before talks

#### CONSTITUTIONAL AMNESTY FOR OFFENCES AGAINST THE STATE

In spite of two Government Ministers, both with legal backgrounds, stating that an Amnesty law might present constitutional problems, the President had told the Acholi Parliamentary Group in August that he had asked the Attorney General to draft an Amnesty Bill for presentation to Parliament. Then, on 29/10/97, the President confirmed this at a Press Conference. He was quoted in *New Vision* of 30/10: “Because of big pressure I will accept amnesty to them because I don’t want to appear to be an obstacle to many people. I am under pressure. I can include the whole gang”. The paper reported that he argued that Kony and his commanders have consistently waged a vicious insurgency against civilians who they maim, abduct, rape and kill, and described it as a “crime against humanity”. But President Museveni reportedly insisted that as an individual he was still opposed to negotiation with or granting amnesty to “these kind of rebels”. In response the LRA in a press release have welcomed this willingness to consider a non-militaristic solution and have offered to enter into “constructive meaningful dialogue”, while pointing out that the offer of amnesty is itself “inadequate to resolve the conflict”.

The constitutional issue arises out of the deliberate exclusion from the Constitution of the 1967 constitutional provision for Presidential pardons before or after court proceedings. Now the President

only has the prerogative of mercy to reduce a penalty not to waive a conviction. An amnesty introduced in 1987 was for a limited period of 3 months, which was renewed for another 3 months before lapsing. The President may now only grant an amnesty if there is a specific law, although in practice there has been in operation a de-facto amnesty for the rebels in Gulu & Kitgum, with returnees and captured rebels being passed on to the counselling programmes after questioning by the military.

The Constitution enjoins each and every citizen to defend the Constitution and oppose anyone who seeks to use unconstitutional means to take power. From that position, some in Cabinet consider that it would be removing the constitutional rights of individual citizens for a law to be passed giving powers of amnesty in certain cases of treason, but that it would be in order to make administrative rulings to this effect. However the most senior law officers take a contrary view that the latter administrative approach would be unconstitutional, but that Parliament can make laws for the good order and security of the country and that where there is total breakdown in a region it is in order for Parliament to draft a law that could improve security by granting amnesty.

Whatever the constitutional niceties, an initial draft of an Amnesty Bill has been drafted by the Attorney General. This has been based on the old 1987 lapsed Amnesty law which frees certain categories of persons in defined circumstances from being tried for offences against the state. It does not provide an amnesty for personal crimes such as murder, rape or kidnapping. Although the President publicly makes the distinction between the leaders and the led, it is unlikely that any of the rebel leaders could be convicted of treason given the frequent government assertions that they are merely armed gangsters with no political objectives. The real issue remains not of offences against the state, but criminal offences against individuals. In addition, children defined in Uganda law as under 18 years of age fall under the Children's Statute and would generally be considered among "the led".

As one put it in Kitgum, an amnesty must be "unconditional, covering all including the top commanders, and respected and not a government trick deceiving leaders who are then killed". "An Amnesty must be respected by the government and by the people; it must be a legal amnesty with a parliamentary basis, then it will be respected by the President because enacted by the people's representatives in Parliament".

#### TRADITIONAL RESOLUTION FOR OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON

"An amnesty should involve forgiveness", but this "traditionally comes after payment of damages" [see (8)].

At the 1994 talks, The LRA army commander acknowledged the “cutting of lips, hands and deforming people”, but saw this as a consequence of the so-called *ludito* changing their minds and creating a dangerous situation for the fighters who were suddenly disowned and became isolated in the bush and personally vulnerable as well as suffering increasing hardship. It is the commission of these “personal” offences and the guilt associated with them which is at the heart of the continuing conflict in Acholi. No resolution which will hold can avoid addressing these offences.

Discussion with lawyers has suggested ways in which a law dealing with personal crimes and restoration between victim and offender could be drafted to give it widespread national appeal. The proposal is for a radical law which would graft traditional reconciliation of *Lex Africana* onto the conservative punitive assumptions of *Lex Romana* which has been imported as the basis of Ugandan law. This reflects an increasing concern in Europe and in Canada at least to bring in the victim’s perspective and the need to heal relationships broken by offences. Such a law could have multiple uses over the years to come, such as in Karamoja. A scenario could exist in the future in, say, Kabale District, if land pressure were to lead to escalating violence exceeding the control mechanisms of existing law, in which such a broad Amnesty Law could be beneficial.

Discussions have been held with senior law officers. Even without a separate law, the DPP could accept any local traditional action which has dealt with a particular offence and decide not to prosecute once someone has passed through a particular local process. But it is unlikely that the guilty parties would feel secure in this. Governments can change and the person might fear being prosecuted on the grounds that the earlier decision was simply an administrative one with no legal validity. As a senior government lawyer put it, “It would be better to have a law passed which allows for a traditional approach”. In the eyes of one experienced lawyer in Kampala: “many lawyers are very conservative and unwilling to take a creative and imaginative approach to the law”. A law incorporating potential use of the strengths of a traditional system could be drafted, but it would be likely to be legally contentious as well as contentious among parliamentarians.

Even a lawyer involved in justice and reconciliation work takes a Western formal legal view “avoiding linking to traditional or customary offences, practices and institutions because (a) the problem at hand is national in character and cuts across ethnic boundaries, and (b) the “customary institutions” are in some cases non-existent and non-coherent and therefore incapable of shouldering responsibility for a matter of such grave national importance as amnesty which, essentially, should be seen as an instrument for

promoting peace and reconciliation”. But by restricting such a law to acts of insurgency and victims of insurgency and to crimes of a “political nature”, it is clear that Western law is incapable of addressing the situations of human rights abuses and break-down of social order which have arisen in Uganda over the past 30 years. In particular, it is incapable of coming up with a resolution which has a healing effect on society. It simply is not fitted to carry such a social burden. This is apparent in the failure of criminal procedures in Uganda and even the Region to deal with atrocities committed by past regimes and rebel groups. Convictions have been negligible and redress non-existent. The legal process simply encourages the guilty to deny responsibility which runs counter to any reconciliation work. Offences such as rape and murder of children and mutilation would not be covered in any amnesty based on the political nature of crimes and no rebel is likely to be persuaded by such partial amnesty.

To build on the inherent strengths of African traditional justice is feasible even if contentious. The fact that some traditional reconciliation has continued informally in addition to formal legal processes reflects the failure of formal western legal concepts in spite of 100 years of seeking to eliminate traditional law. Moreover, the Constitution does contain an element of seeking to reconcile parties when adjudicating cases and refers to adequate compensation for victims of wrongs. A more substantive difficulty concerns the question of “fairness” of a law being applied differently across the Districts of Uganda. The proposal below was suggested to assert standard universal constitutional principles within which local variety can operate, subject to executive approval, in order to deal with periods of severe breakdown of social cohesion and order.

#### RECORDING OFFENCE RESOLUTION

As this traditional offence resolution is intended to be incorporated for a limited period, of say two months at the termination of the war, within the Uganda legal system, it is essential that adequate records must be kept. Each returnee would be asked to confess with as much detail as they can remember any violent offences in which they may have taken part, which will be recorded as a formal statement before a witness or adviser of their choice. The offender and their adviser/witness and the *Rwot kaka* (or whoever is agreed to act in this process) should each sign the record and the decision as to compensation. It may help for compensation to be passed to the returnee and thence to the *Rwot kaka* at that time and receipts given and records made before the witness.

In various discussions it was agreed that it would help to have an independent international agency present at these proceedings and keeping control of the records. Ideally, on completion of the whole process these records would be removed from Uganda to be kept at a suitable secure location where they could be accessed only on the formal request of a returnee and in order to clear them from any other related legal proceedings. There would therefore be a possible residual on-going cost of servicing such access, should occasion arise. This neutral record holding would reassure returnees that their confessions will not be used in the future to target them having voluntarily made confessions. It is considered an essential safety precaution and guarantee to the returnees.

## TWO POSSIBLE BILLS FOR AMNESTY AND FOR TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The twin-track legal approach is as follows:

### **A. Amnesty:**

A.1 subject to approval by the Attorney General and the Minister for Defence a schedule may be appended to the Act providing an amnesty within the following constraints:

A.1.1 covering one or more of the following:

- treason
- conspiring to overthrow the legitimate established government as defined in the constitution
- armed rebellion
- holding illegal combat arms
- obtaining material or financial aid to effect one of the above
- destruction of state property
- theft of state property
- disclosing confidential state information

A.1.2 covering offences committed within specified geographic boundaries within or outside Uganda

A.1.3 covering offences committed within clearly specified time boundaries not exceeding 4 weeks after the public promulgation of such a schedule in the national press and radio

**B. Traditional Offence Resolution:**

B.1 subject to approval by the Attorney General and the Minister for Local Government a schedule may be appended to the Act providing for the following traditional offence resolution within the following constraints:

B.1.1 covering one or more of the following:

theft  
 destruction of property  
 destruction of crops  
 moving of land boundary posts  
 armed robbery  
 assault  
 affray  
 indecent assault  
 sexual intercourse with a child under the age of consent  
 rape  
 accidental death  
 manslaughter  
 murder  
 incitement to the above  
 conspiracy to effect the above

B.1.2 covering offences committed within clearly specified time boundaries not exceeding 4 weeks after the public promulgation of such a schedule in the national press and radio

B.1.3 restricted to offences voluntarily confessed by offenders

B.1.4 covering offenders who claim by birth to be born or to have lived for up to five years within specified districts of Uganda

B.1.5 providing the LC5 of such specified Districts have submitted a schedule of the offences to be covered and the traditional resolution to be applied and its method of application specifying

the period during which the traditional resolution shall be applied

the penalties or compensation to be imposed

those who shall impose the penalties

to whom or to what institution compensation will be paid

the extent of any collation of offences to be taken account of in a consolidation process

the period of time by which penalties or compensation must be completed

the method of informing or involving victims

specific or general beneficiaries of any restitution or compensation

the method of recording such offences, judgments and fulfillment of penalties

arrangements regarding the security of such records

arrangements regarding access to such records

B.1.6 providing such penalties and compensation shall not exceed the maximum penalties that may generally be imposed by a magistrate at the time

B.1.7 providing the cost of such penalties shall be met from District budgets

B.1.8 providing that the offender may be represented by a legal or other adviser of their choice

B.1.9 providing that the record of the confession and judgment shall be signed by the offender and their adviser as a witness and by the person responsible for the judgment

B.1.10 providing the process and penalties imposed on an offender by such traditional resolution shall not breach the rights of the individual as enshrined in the constitution

### B.2 *Right Of Appeal:*

An offender shall have the right to appeal in writing to the District Magistrate's office or to the Attorney General within two weeks of a judgment in order to have the case transferred to the national courts for hearing under the laws in force in the country and such right of appeal to be communicated to the offender before witnesses at the time of judgment

### B.3 *Prevention Of Double Charges*

An offender who has confessed to specific and general crimes under this Act and Schedule and been dealt with according to the procedures agreed in the Schedule shall not be able to be tried again for the same offences in another court of Uganda.

## TRUTH COMMISSION

Amnesty International has suggested a Truth Commission approach, but this would require Parliamentary approval and a legal notice. In South Africa such a Commission was introduced after cessation of hostilities. A senior law officer asserted that this would not work with the Acholi situation and would offer no incentive to end the insecurity, but would be more likely to continue the insecurity. It cannot work until after cessation of hostilities. Even in South Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu has recognised the difficulty of bringing reconciliation through the Commission. A better way forward in Uganda seems to be through inviting voluntary admissions of guilt so that responsibility can be acknowledged and compensation paid and reconciliation effected as strongly as possible.

Both LRA representatives and some independent Acholi raise the problem of abuses committed by the government, some demanding a tribunal with powers to prosecute "war criminals". Such an approach would lead to equal demands with regard to the LRA and therefore to a breakdown of the whole reconciliation process. What the demand seems also to express is the need for amnesty and reconciliation to be extended equally to all parties.

Traditionally, Acholi recognised three levels of possible responsibility for death - deliberate or “murder”; accidental or “manslaughter”; and coincidental or “death by misadventure”. Compensation was in terms of cows and money, the latter not being seen as being as acceptable as cattle. However, with the loss of cattle in Acholi some such equivalence must be determined. Less cattle would be paid for manslaughter. Rape required two cows in compensation in the past, but is now under the magistrates courts.

### OPPORTUNITY FOR REASSURANCE

One suggestion was made that before a resolution, the fighters could be given time to return to their own villages if they wish to, with their guns, in order to talk it over with their relatives. While it could be argued that this could facilitate a higher level of compliance, it is believed that if the agreed provisions, assurances and processes are clearly established in or before the talks, then the LRA could act as a body without the fighters seeking individual assurances.

### LEGITIMACY

What appears feasible is for a twin-track approach. A conservative approach to an Amnesty Law for offences against the State, as drafted by the Attorney General and as existed in 1987, covering the sort of areas referred to in A.1.1 above, will be put before Parliament and the constitutional issues debated. With regard to the criminal offences which are at the core of the current insecurity in the north, the *Rwodi-mo* will come up with their proposals for handling this by radical traditional means (see chapter 8 below) and submit these through the Gulu and Kitgum District representatives of the respective LC5s who will then approve these and submit them for consideration by the Attorney General. The Acholi can then explain to the government law officers how they think their proposals will work and the LC5s may also ask to meet the Parliamentary Committee on Defence in order to tie their proposals to the defence issues of resolving the insecurity. The aim would be to place this approach within the Constitution’s allowance for recognition of traditional customs. The Attorney General is in a position to advise Government on whether the proposals would require a general law within which to be placed to give legal validity or whether the proposals can be given force under existing provisions.

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**6 (a) Parliament should seek to expedite the Government's Amnesty Bill.**

**6 (b) The *Rwodi-mo* of Kitgum and Gulu should now take advice in drafting proposals for how to deal with violent personal offences by traditional means involving confessions and compensation, for submission through the two LC5s to the Attorney General.**

**6 (c) The Attorney General may wish to obtain the support of the legal community for a radical law enabling traditional resolution of violent personal offences to be effected in special circumstances of social breakdown and then advise on the way forward under the Constitution.**

**6 (d) An international body should be identified and approached with a view to fulfilling the role of recording confessions and compensations as a lasting legal record of this reconciliation, providing long-term security for and access to these records for legal purposes.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 7

#### A PLACE IN THE PEACE

**7. Talks Agenda - Re-Incorporation Of Fighters & Abductees** (possibly including those returned since Jan 1994)

7.1 preparation of community (adults & children) to receive back fighters

7.2 short-term & long-term counselling by qualified counsellors under professional training team with one-to-one processing & follow-up

7.3 handing in of weapons to international team

7.4 reporting of known landmine locations to clearance team

7.5 reconciliation (traditional) back into clans with blood of lamb cleansing ritual & drinking *oput*

7.6 resettlement packages comprising:

7.6.1 employment opportunity alternatives of:

7.6.1.1 educational placement with fees paid to P7 and S4 equivalent

7.6.1.2 special residential education/training for disabled

7.6.1.3 vocational skills training with trade tools on completion

7.6.1.4 ox-team & plough for adults

7.6.1.5 trade tools for adults

7.6.1.6 consideration of option of military employment

7.6.2 ex-gratia resettlement grant paid in 3 annual instalments

### SECURITY & HOPE

Acholi have a saying “karac ci rac” (“if it is bad let it be bad”) which they suggest applies to the rebel position. If there is no hope for them personally in terms of security and an economic future then they might as well fight on. In spite of all the suffering at the hands of the LRA, Acholi believe that each returnee must be offered “a package to provide a livelihood” and that there should be “a realistic programme supervised by an independent organisation”. This complements the concern to achieve genuine reconciliation and to ensure that there is no victimisation at the village level.

The only employment opportunity offered by the British administration to Acholi seems to have been the martial professions of the police, army and prisons service. But the Acholi can give evidence that they are not traditionally warriors and have no “warrior tradition”, although some have accepted the British “martial race” mythology to preserve an economic niche. Acholi joined the army in the past for economic reasons “looking for cattle and then marriage” as well as masculine prowess. Their Second World War experience and success both reinforced an association with the army and showed the necessity for formal education in order to progress and achieve higher incomes. This led to post world-war demobilisation grants being invested in education and post-war cotton incomes being used to pay for fees.

Adult fighters, who are thought to comprise a small core of the LRA, may be interested in questions of development and economic opportunity, although their primary concerns, expressed in contacts with relatives when considering the possibility of returning, have been regarding personal security. The top commanders, Kony, Oti Lagony or Brigade commanders, may doubt any assurances given and are thought unlikely to stay within Uganda. One of these commanders, when his clan tried to invite him back from the bush, asked where he could go without being lynched either at home or in Gulu or in Kampala. Acholi believe that they can put in place the necessary reconciliation to guarantee re-incorporation. Kony expresses to his officers his fear that if the war is ended, the President could then order him to be killed. However, the government has apparently signed three agreements, in Malawi, in Libya and in Khartoum, with the Sudanese government to assure the top commanders that Uganda will honour a third-country refuge for them. It is the next level of the LRA who are most significant in deciding the relative balance of coming out or continuing in the bush. It is their decision as operational commanders which determines the fate of the majority of those in the bush, the children.

Some LRA fighters have been asking for an alternative place to stay as they would feel insecure returning to Acholi. In this regard, Kinyanya Sugar Works in Bunyoro is said to be willing to assimilate 200 ex-fighters. Other suggestions have included starting a resettlement scheme for returned fighters. Those who have already returned and who have been longer in the bush have generally been sent to the World Vision centre in Bunyoro, rather than Gulu, where they have received tools and opportunity to produce cash crops.

A report in New Vision on 14/10/97 quoted a former LRA officer, claiming to be part of the LRA which ambushed a convoy two weeks earlier on the Pakwach road, speaking on Gulu Radio, the UPDF

controlled station serving Gulu District. “2nd Lieutenant” Michael Obote claimed that he had been sent by “Lt Col” John Matata to find out if it was safe for some of them to return home. He said that he was “now out and living peacefully. I call on you Brigade Commander Otti Lagony, Division I.O. Major Odiambo, Major Ochan, Major Tabu Ongaya, Dr. Ocol, Captain Ojara Kibwota and all LRAs to sit and advise the big man, Major General Joseph Kony. Tell him this war will not take us anywhere”.

Alice Auma “Lakwena”, now resident in Kenya, is said by government to be willing to come back to Uganda if her safety can be guaranteed. However, the government feel that such a guarantee is near impossible to give because of the bitter feelings in Acholi against former rebel leaders. A suggestion by one person in Acholi was that in the current uncertain period, before a comprehensive resolution, if a returnee comes to the village, the gun should be taken to the LC and the person simply kept in the village. But this could only be a temporary measure and offers no wider solution, leaving the returnee vulnerable and unreconciled and the gun as a potential hazard.

One report suggests that about 6,000 of possibly 8,000 abducted from Kitgum are children and about 50% of these have returned and half of these have received counselling. A higher proportion of children from Kitgum than from Gulu are thought to have escaped. UNICEF currently thinks that about 9,600 abducted children are missing from Gulu and Kitgum Districts, with about 2,400 abducted from neighbouring areas. 70% of those abducted are aged 12-15 years. Half the children are feared dead. With an open approach by the RDC Gulu in addressing public meetings in the villages without a military escort, many LRA fighters have attended and on occasion raised issues of their future security. Possibly partly encouraged as a result of this engagement over 3,000 have come out of the bush, with 2,100 reported as passing through the World Vision programme and about 1,100 through the GUSCO programme. The agencies and District authorities are currently building a data-bank of past and present returnees.

### EDUCATION & SKILLS TRAINING

Returning children, many of whose parents were killed when they were captured, will not be among the priorities for impoverished and displaced relatives. An education &/or training element with fees being paid up to P7 or for secondary students up to S4 or S6 is a priority within the portfolio of resettlement packages on offer. Since 1994, only children have been abducted and these form the vast majority of the fighters and returnees.

Pabbo R.C. Parish is opening a temporary technical school in order to give returnees skills. World Vision's resettlement scheme of training exposes returnees to different skills available in the centre, covering carpentry & joinery, bricklaying and concrete practice, tailoring, bicycle repair and agriculture. They are allowed to pursue their own choice, not so much as training but as therapy. On completion they are given tools, but even while training they can earn in order to meet their contribution of half the cost of the tools, which is aimed to reduce the dependency syndrome. Over 480 have completed courses and are now earning their own living. World Vision works with World Food Programme to provide a re-union package on return to their village of 60kg of posho, about 40kg of beans and 5 litres of cooking oil. Some completing the Kiryandongo programme in Bunyoro bring bags of food which they have grown and clothes or a case bought with their personal income. They can often return home with more than they had when they left home. However, it is felt that this can further discourage those whose children have died. "Therefore building a school would help these grieving families".

### TRAUMA & COUNSELLING

With the forced killings and psycho-traumatic damage inflicted on them, even the living have been described by Acholi as "dead people". Their primary requirement is for adequate counselling and a gentle re-introduction to the discipline of formal education. One such girl was so nervous in school that she would sit by the door and frequently cry out that "They're coming! They're coming!" Few returnees have managed to survive in their old schools subjected to the rejection of their erstwhile peers with taunts such as "rebel" and "wife of Kony". One suggestion has been made for a separate school for all returnees. However, Church leaders and teachers in Kitgum are discussing plans for working with children in schools, who although never abducted are also traumatised, in order to prepare them to receive and accept returnees. This approach is included in the Assessment briefing which UNICEF is putting out for a specialist Uganda-based team due to report by April 1998 (see Appendix No 3). Funding for the Assessment and its outcome is expected to be negotiated by UNICEF.

World Vision in Gulu is holding school sessions for teachers in basic trauma counselling skills. They have also joined with the Catholic Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator to hold community sessions of a 2-day "Stress & Trauma Management Workshop". These have had nearly 250 participants in all, including 24 senior soldiers and 48 teachers together with clan chiefs, opinion leaders and LC3 & 2 members. These helped them to identify their problems and recognise their own trauma.

Kitgum has tended to favour a counselling approach within the community with some brief training and support for Community Volunteer Counsellors, while the different political environment in Gulu has led to a centre approach to counselling. Further details of the counselling and other provision for these children is available in the Proceedings & Recommendations of the Workshop on “Psycho-Social Support Programmes in Northern Uganda” prepared by the Core Group on Psycho-Social Support, Kampala Aug 1997, available from UNICEF, together with the Terms of Reference for the Assessment of such programmes (see Appendix No 3). The problems being identified are not only current, but have implications for years into the future. “It can take 5-10 years to de-traumatise a child” is the opinion of the person in charge of counselling in Kitgum. To address this requires on-going counselling support as well as enhancing the traditional reconciliation and healing processes and the long-term ministry of the churches.

### ARMY RECRUITMENT

At the ‘94 Bigombe talks, Kony is said to have asked for his soldiers to be given a separate barracks as part of the UPDF. This may have been part of their feeling of insecurity in the light of past accords (see chapter 2). Several Acholi felt that no LRA fighter should be allowed to continue in the army (UPDF) as they could not be relied upon not to engage in similar vicious activities as in the past, so further damaging the name of Acholi. Even vetting former LRA fighters by their LC1 village council was not trusted as it was suggested that villagers might be afraid to refuse such people access to army employment or would be tempted to export a problem person to the army. Moreover Kony “officers” lack academic qualifications for equivalent transfer as the UPDF officers are said to require graduate level education. As with settling back into the community, former rebels were they to join the UPDF would need to “accept the rules of the community”.

### RESETTLEMENT PACKAGE OPTIONS

A senior government official outlined his view of the packages needed to be on offer for different groups of former fighters and other returnees.:

- adult returnees:                resettlement with plough and pair of oxen for each adult
- returnee school leavers: vocational training

- farming
- carpentry
- building
- tailoring
- home-economics
- simple mechanics

returnee children:

1. no parents: find close relatives and assist these with means to look after the children; government paying primary school fees & find donors to pay secondary fees
2. disfigured: provide community home with skills training and activities
3. others: return home for integration.

One proposal for inclusion in the resettlement package was for tax exemption for 2 or 3 years. Ex-gratia resettlement grants in addition to the compensation element could be paid in three annual instalments on completion of initial counselling and annually thereafter, subject to the approval of the respective LC3 councils confirming “good conduct”.

The options should be clearly set out and costed to ensure adequate funding before being offered to returnees during the resolution period. The offers should be made as part of the initial counselling and a written decision made by the returnee following completion of the traditional *mato oput* reconciliation in their own home sub-county. Many stressed that the packages should all include in the first instalment of the financial payment an adequate additional figure to cover the compensation requirement (see section 8.2). This could be advanced to them through the sub-county where it will also be immediately collected again for re-allocation to the memorial primary schools building funds for the two Districts and Aboke. On return to the counselling resettlement centres, returnees should receive the package of their choice and necessary advice and consequent training or support in the community as they take their option.

It was pointed out that the offer of a resettlement package should also be made to all returnees who had been recorded as being with the LRA for a minimum period of, say, 3 months at any time since, say, the breakdown of the peace talks in February 1994. This would avoid discrimination against those who have returned by one means or another in the past few years. Some of these have already received

resettlement packages through World Vision or GUSCO which should be taken account of in the current process.

These options could apply to all returnees, past and future, already recorded by their LCs and confirmed by independent checking and publication of the lists as having gone missing, whether as abductees or voluntarily, combatants or non-combatants.

### DEMOBILISATION

As part of the initial counselling, a returnee should hand in any weapons which they possess to the international weapons collection team, receiving a signed receipt. They would also be asked to report the known placements of any landmines or other weapons. A record should be kept by the international team of a returnees identity and place of origin and also of their unit or location and period in the bush.

When undergoing the reconciliation process in their home sub-county, each returnee should be asked to confess to any offences, specific or general, to which they consider that they were party. These should be recorded with a witness by the team of international reconciliation monitors for safe-keeping outside Uganda. Transcripts of these records should be made available on request in the future should a person be re-accused of any offence dealt with under these arrangements.

These processes need to have adequate personnel prepared to cope with the expected influx of perhaps 6,000 returnees over a short period. There should be agreed procedures, facilities and training to fulfill the task efficiently and sensitively. This will require accommodation in the schools of Gulu and Kitgum and contracted transport facilities, supervised by existing NGOs on the ground with support from international bodies.

#### **For Consideration, arising out of the consultation:**

**7 (a) The LRA should draw up names and details of identities of all fighters and abductees in their camps and under their command as of, say, December 25 1997 to be compared with the records held by the Districts.**

**7 (b) The Districts, with World Vision and GUSCO, should draw up details of all returnees who spent at least 3 months in the bush between February 1994 and, say, December 25 1997, which should then be put through a comprehensive and transparent vetting process.**

**7 (c) Resettlement package options should be drafted and costed at an average of US \$600 per option, including overhead costs at say 5% and US\$150 for compensation payments, for submission by the RDCs of Gulu and Kitgum to the Government of Uganda (n.b. total cost of packages estimated not to exceed US \$9m, including \$2.25m for the memorial primary schools and two memorial centres for the disabled).**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 8

#### RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

**8. Talks Agenda - Reconciliation:** *acknowledging responsibility -> repentance -> compensation -> reconciliation*

8.1 calming & cleansing rituals prior to process

8.2 individual Acholi confessions

8.2.1 recorded and secured internationally to prevent possible repeat convictions (see 6 above)

8.2.2 compensation paid to *Rwodi-mo* out of resettlement package

8.2.3 *mato oput* carried out with *Rwot-mo* & *Ludito kaka*

8.2.4 all compensation payments collated and used to build a memorial primary school in each sub-county of Gulu & Kitgum and Aboke sub-county (see 4, 6 & 7)

8.3 matching government admissions

8.3.1 possible compensation/re-stocking scheme &/or use of ox-team scheme (see 4.1.3)

8.4 *mato oput* between clans

8.5 external reconciliation (see 9)

8.6 “bending of spears” (see 10.4)

8.7 giving the blessing of *oboke olwedo* - peace branch (see 10.5)

As an LRA spokesman put it, “the Acholi must be given the chance to amend the wounds among themselves. This must be done traditionally by the community”. Yet there is also a wider context and a government minister noted that “conflict resolution must involve all who have the will. It is a collective responsibility which transcends race, borders and creed”. There is a need for Acholi to meet both the specific demands of the local cultural situation and the universal requirements applicable to all cultures.

## TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

Acholi clans and sub-clans are strictly geographically local unlike many areas of Uganda where clans cross-cut the whole “tribe” or “nation”. Every clan is of equal status, although the Payeera have pre-eminence and the Rwot Payeera is de-facto primus-inter-pares of the *Rwodi-mo*. The Payeera clan are the largest numerically and geographically as well as being split across the Aswa river which divides the Eastern (Kitgum or *lumalo*) clans from the Western (Gulu or *lupiny*) clans. Each clan has a royal family, which have fraternal links with each other and with the royal houses of the kingdoms to the south, particularly the Banyoro, since these royal families are believed to have come from the Lwo peoples. The sub-clans do not have royal families, but respected elders are recognised for as long as they are able to lead wisely.

Each family is fiercely independent and every Acholi man is held to be “**a king in his own house**” (“*arwot ki oda*”). Such independence limits the powers of the traditional chiefs to that of ruling by consent and decisions of the chief tend to be final summaries of the consensus view of the elders and advisers to which any man may contribute openly. No Rwot could force his will upon an objecting household and had to rely on persuasion and the weight of community and clan opinion. This has been both a strength and a weakness in modern Acholi, for political leadership cannot guarantee compliance with its direction.

The influence of *Rwodi-mo* (“anointed chiefs”) in Acholi over the population has been eroded over the years, since the British administration and post-Independence governments placed their own appointees, selected on the basis of educational or political criteria, in administrative roles of comparable title and geographic responsibility. These non-hereditary administrative *Rwodi* were described as “*kalam omia*” (“the pen has made me”). However with appointed chiefs being agents of government and enforcing administrative objectives of the government, government failed to obliterate the traditional role of the *Rwodi*.

The heirs of each traditional clan chief or *Rwot* were informally recognised and successors to a deceased *Rwot* were selected by the royal families from the immediate sons, but not anointed (anointing with oil = “*mo*”). It was not necessarily the eldest son who inherits, but a son who showed ability and the essential quality of listening to people. “When we gather around the fire of an evening in Acholi, the information

passed around is the same that the chief gets as the peasant gets. Every message passed on to a chief when young is the same as that passed on to a commoner. The only difference expected is that of natural ability and the exercise of responsibility”.

The position of the *Rwodi-mo* was undermined by the government appointee system which took over some of their traditional responsibilities. However, they were able to retain some residual influence over cultural affairs and particularly with regard to dispute settlement over and above the punishment-based judicial system operated by the official hierarchy of government appointed chiefs and later magistrates.

In the early days of British rule, the *Rwodi* generally avoided sending their sons to be educated in a system which they did not trust. This further marginalised the traditional *Rwodi* from the modernising national structures, but also protected them from being compromised as agents of those structures. Moreover, those royal sons who accepted government appointment as chiefs were generally excluded from being selected as the future *Rwot*, being seen as compromised. There are examples of *Rwodi* being selected and appointed as heirs where they have been in unrelated government positions, such as one Town Clerk of Gulu. *Rwot Achana* of Payira has held a potentially compromising government appointment in the past, but was the chosen heir of his father and is accepted as such. It was even suggested in one meeting in Kitgum that *Rwot Achana* should be appointed *Rwot Aswa* County, as a government position, in order to stand between the Government and the people, on the grounds that he is respected by the people, and provided he was helped by the traditional counsellors, the *Rwodi kaka*. No one person in Kitgum has a comparable authority to lead, but the *Rwodi-mo* together with the church leaders, who carry widespread respect and influence, could effect a concerted leadership. In Kitgum, the body comprising the *Rwot-mo* of each clan, the *Rwodi-mo*, is collectively referred to as the *Rwodi kwaro* (the “ancestral” elders).

The Kitgum LC5 Chairman considers that the *Rwodi-mo* should be assisted, particularly to enable them to move from village to village, as they are very helpful in resolving conflicts. The *Rwodi-mo* have come up with a constitution which will enable them to function as a body. This is not seen as establishing a political body and as such is no threat to political interests. Rather the LC5 Chairman sees the traditional approach to reconciliation as a well established system which needs to be activated in the current circumstances. Indeed the Acholi Parliamentary Group noted that the Parliamentarians are supporting the *Rwodi-mo*. Many Acholi recognise that it will take time to repair the positive traditional cultural elements which have been so destroyed by political events over the years.

The *Rwot kaka* (“clan chief” implying some inherited status) or *ladit kaka* (“clan elder”, although this title can refer to status by reason of age) is an elder, generally from each sub-clan, who together form a body of advisers to the *Rwot-mo* of the clan. They are expected to know everything about the sub-clan and to assist in dispute settlement by investigating the circumstances and may be asked to act on behalf of the *Rwot-mo*, as a “messenger” (= “*lakwena*”), traditionally carrying his stick as a sign of their delegated authority. Since the *Rwodi-mo* must “stand in the middle”, it is these *Rwodi kaka* who must do their part in any dispute negotiations. The *ladit kaka* report to the *ladit pa Rwot* of whom there is one senior *ladit pa Rwot madit* for each clan who reports direct to the *Rwot-mo*. The *Ladit kaka* fulfills a more traditional administrative role than the *Rwot-mo*. Both the Minister for the North, M.P. Owiny Dollo, and the RDC Gulu, Peter Odok, have in different ways recently sought to identify these elders and use them towards conflict resolution and promoting village level economic development respectively.

Frequent reference is also made to “opinion leaders” which is not simply a modern concept, but translates the traditional *Luboong pa Rwodi* who are commoners, members of non-royal clans whose opinions are respected. This is a slightly wider term than that of *Rwot kaka*, generally more descriptive and less formal. Some suggest that the position of *Rwot kaka* was compromised by being used by the British whereas the *Luboong* truly represent the people. The elected LC3 councillors cover the same geographic area as the sub-clan, but they have tended not to include the *Ludito kaka*. This is probably the result of two factors - disassociating traditional leadership from government functions and avoidance of electing respected people to an office which might endanger them.

Women leaders are also respected and their voice listened to. These *Lawii-mon* or, more formally, *Rwodi-mon* are those who are knowledgeable in all aspects of women’s affairs. They are also respected on clan affairs. One of them is traditionally installed at the same time as the *Rwot-mo*.

There is a potential strength in the marginalisation of the traditional role of the *Rwodi-mo* in that it has become independent of the political and administrative processes. Its residual and traditional importance in the settling of disputes and in reconciliation is just what is needed at this time. The danger is that the *Rwodi-mo*, lacking formal and personal resources, may feel the need to seek government funding to fulfill the task currently being required of them. One *Rwot-mo* insisted that they should keep their independence by providing their own food and travel for meetings. Were an NGO to fund their activity at a modest level using public transport, they would not be compromised in popular or rebel eyes.

The RDC Gulu has given moral support to re-introducing to the people respect for this traditional role and office, particularly that of Rwot Achana as the senior *Rwot*. A Ugandan peace & reconciliation group, under the future Church of Uganda Bishop of Gulu, has sought to support meetings and training workshops for the Gulu *Rwodi-mo*. Meetings of the Gulu *Rwodi-mo* are also attended by one or two younger men of royal families who act as secretary or translator to the group where necessary, so gaining experience. Rather than government taking over the institution of *Rwodi-mo* it needs to agree to Acholi demands for them to play a role in creating reconciliation.

While most of the *Rwodi-mo* have never been anointed, several in Kitgum have been anointed secretly and Rwot Achana of Payira is considering a formal anointing of the *Rwodi* in March 1998 - his father Yona Odida was the last anointed Rwot of Payira. This would reportedly be welcomed by the people if the *Rwodi* avoid any political role, seeking only to maintain their traditional authority of influence over cultural affairs and reconciliation. With the authority of the *Rwodi-mo* so eroded many Acholi do not know what to do, but it was suggested therefore that there is needed a vigorous programme to sensitise Acholi in order to link people with the needs of the present situation. To achieve a resolution acceptable to the whole of Kitgum and Gulu Districts, will involve the stakeholders of *Rwodi-mo*, *Rwodi-kaka*, *Lawii-mon* together with church leaders and the state.

“The elders (*Rwodi kaka*) as a group still have influence collectively. ... There has been an absolute break in continuity so that they cannot now be revived. ... Restoration of the *Rwodi-mo* would divide people, but re-establishing their role in conflict resolution and dispute settlement would be welcomed.” “The *Rwodi-mo* are not at this time credible, but the Acholi need those who can come forward credibly to say that the rebels are forgiven”.

Some of the loss of unity between the elders and the people is attributed to political divisions, in the past UPC and DP, but now the new “party” divide of “Movementists” (NRM) and “Multi-partyists”, leading to exclusion on political grounds of many worthy “elders”. Only the *Rwodi-mo* have the credibility to bring together any representative gathering of respected elderly people (*ludongo*) who could speak for the people. Such a meeting “might require help, but if convinced of its importance they might come with their own food in order to keep apart from the government. The rebels would respect this”.

With the collapse of traditional networking and values, “the elders have failed to take on the responsibility which they should have taken. For example, a young man joins the army and then appears

to have significant income; if this is from stealing, the elders should have rejected this, but the elders were poor and were compromised by allowing wrong to occur”.

### TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As *Rwot Achana* put it in a meeting of the *Rwodi-mo*, “there is no precedence in the history of the Acholi for the current situation”. Even the chaos wreaked in Acholi by marauding Nubians in the mid 19th century was not as internally damaging as the current war, yet “God wants the problem of Acholi to end”. First there needs to be “calmness in the land”. “If peace is not restored in Acholi soon, what happened in Rwanda, Zaire and Burundi will occur”. The *Rwodi-mo* have been trying to bring peace, but have so far failed. Another *Rwot-mo* stated that “what the rebels are doing is so strange - never known in Acholi experience”.

### CONTEXTUALISING TRADITIONAL RECONCILIATION

**“It needs the *Rwodi* from Kitgum and Gulu to discuss and come out with a common agreed solution”**. In particular, they need to discuss the compensation details. The assumption is that all clans (and sub-clans) are both victims and perpetrators. As the *Rwodi-mo* meet to discuss the method of dealing with this situation, people need to be invited to consider and understand the proposed approach in order to get their agreement. To this end, as is customary in Acholi, a wide cross-section of leaders should be involved, including women and youth. Such consultations within the Acholi community may need some financial facilitation from independent sources to enable the elders to travel freely, although others expect them to find support from community resources. As with any idea in Acholi, if the proposal is good, all will accept and Acholi can then speak with one voice.

### “COOLING” THE SITUATION

*Rwodi* in Kitgum District have been moving in a less formally organised way to “cool the situation” and to seek to find ways to contact LRA fighters from their clans. Earlier a two-man team sent by the *Rwodi-mo* of Gulu to meet with Kony in June 1996 led to their deaths at the hands of an LRA unit (see Gersony

p 54) as a result of what is frequently seen as a consequence of apparently too close links between the government and this initiative at the time.

The process of “cooling” the situation, like a prayer (*kweyo piny* = “pacification”), traditionally involved everyone first sitting down and then a lamb being killed (*tumo romo*), whose blood was considered to “calm down the land”.

The *Rwodi-mo* themselves are seen as “set apart” and were never allowed to touch blood and had to avoid evil. If someone is killed, the *Rwot-mo* will not go to the place where blood is spilt, but will send an elder to investigate and sits quietly while the work is done by the elder. The sacrificial approach is seen as a necessary pre-requisite before the situation can be discussed calmly and rationally. It is apparently already being done secretly by clans all over Acholi before seeking to approach the LRA to suggest peace and reconciliation.

The strong anti-violence values in traditional Acholi society are reflected in the fact no-one who kills can be respected as a leader. Military victory is not seen to confer high status on a person.

After an offence, offenders used to be completely separated for some weeks, not eating with people but having food and water brought to them by a young child. One cannot eat with a person who has killed one’s relatives until something is done and the measure of reconciliation is that one will then be able to share food together. During the “cooling” time, offenders traditionally went to the uncles, in their mothers clan and therefore in a different county, until the process was completed. This led to a suggestion that the returning fighters should be allowed to stay outside Acholi, but within Uganda and not near the border, such as among the related Banyoro south of Karuma. It was felt that the returnees cannot stay with the people in large numbers until the reconciliation process is complete.

A person who has killed anyone in a time of war or even in an accident must go through *yubo kom* (“cleansing the body”) to purify them before being allowed back to stay in their village. The *yubo kom* ritual involved a goat or a ram being killed and, traditionally, an *abila* presentation made to ask the ancestors to forgive and protect. Without this cleansing process it is feared that the victim’s spirit will continue to haunt the person leading to their changed behaviour and possible tendency to kill again. After 1979, such cleansing rituals were neglected and many believe that this resulted in the poor conduct of former soldiers even in their own homes.

For anyone returning to their homestead after a long absence, especially if thought to be possibly dead, traditionally required them to go through a small ritual which entailed treading on an egg before being allowed back.

### COMPROMISED ELDERLY

The *Rwodi* in Kitgum have been researching among themselves to see if any of them had ever given the LRA a clan blessing and are convinced that this never happened. Bazilio Okello is said to have received such a blessing for the 1985 coup. Some so-called “elders” in Gulu town of a non-traditional kind, really only town politicians, met in 1986 to give the then UPDA ex-army rebels their “blessing”, but many believe that no such support has ever been offered to Kony. In addition, traditionally the eldest woman in a clan should give her blessing for hunting or for war, and the women are patently opposed to this war.

Some Acholi, without evidence, remain convinced that some “elders”, not necessarily traditional, did bless the LRA in an individual capacity in the 1980s. Kony himself in his meetings with Betty Bigombe, indicated that he wishes to end the fighting but that he had only been fulfilling the will of the *ludito* (in the context clearly “elderly” rather than formal “elders”) who sent him to the bush with their mandate and blessing (*laa*: literally = “spittle”). The LRA army commander made clear that these *ludito*, against whom he felt very bitter, were principally former national political figures - one now dead. There is a feeling among the LRA that they have been let down by these so-called “elders” given this initial support and blessing.

In the usual way, such elders are being called on by the Acholi to examine their individual consciences and accept responsibility for their actions and themselves seek cleansing. No such elders can expect to participate in any Acholi delegation to talks until they have come clean. The Gulu *Rwodi-mo* are reported to have approached the Kitgum *Rwodi*, who have a richer endowment of traditional rituals, as to how to cancel any such blessings so that it may in the future boomerang on those involved if they persist in fighting.

The consequent marginalisation of the LRA/M from the Acholi has left them isolated and has thus helped perpetuate the war since they cannot expect to be welcomed back into Acholi with open arms.

### MATO OPUT RECONCILIATION

The principle of conflict resolution in Acholi is to create reconciliation which brings the two sides together. Between individuals this involved elders, particularly the moral authority of the *Rwot kaka*, investigating the circumstances, leading to an **acceptance of responsibility** for carrying out a wrong action and an **indication of repentance**. Then terms were laid down by the elders such as 10 cows or a girl for **compensation** implying potential for a future marriage, possibly elsewhere, producing replacement in the case of death and restoring a nexus of relationships. Then reconciliation occurred with the simultaneous drinking of a bitter root extract drink from a common calabash set on the ground - “*mato oput*”.

Between groups the process required a delegation of elders to investigate the fault and identify the cause and for those concerned to accept their responsibility. The acceptance of responsibility is a group acceptance - not so-&-so, son of X, but we have done this. Then the compensation is determined, traditionally cattle or girls, and lastly reconciliation occurs with the “**bending of two spears**” and *mato oput*. “There should be individual *mato oput* for children at the sub-county level and a final *mato oput* between groups - Acholi, Government and LRA - at a public event”.

In spite of their marginalisation from political authority, the *Rwodi-mo* continue on occasion informally to carry out reconciliation with a compensation element to the victim in addition to court decisions. This is to ensure restoration of relationships, which modern court proceedings neglect. Although rebels are seen to have rejected society, “if society now establishes the means of reconciliation, the rebels will accept that authority”. Such acceptance has been confirmed by a representative of the LRA.

One elder noted that we must not forget the religious leaders’ role and that their voices must be heard in the discussions regarding reconciliation. From the church point of view, *mato oput* has historically been recommended by the Roman Catholic church as a positive institution. For example, Fr. Vincent Okot, who has written on traditional reconciliation as a “moral therapy” for Uganda, and the R.C. Pastoral Coordinator, Fr. Santo Ojok, could work closely with colleagues from other churches, such as Bishop Ochola of Kitgum and Pastor Geoffrey Ocan of the Gulu NGO “COME” to work with the *Rwodi-mo*, the LC5s and the people to prepare them for the whole process of reconciliation. Such a mutual involvement will also help to heal the felt disparagement of traditional institutions by the churches in the past.

For reconciliation to be effective today in Acholi, it was said that justice must prevail between the parties which is within the constitution and principles of human rights, such as excluding any arbitrary transfer of girls, and which is culturally acceptable and realistic.

While many suggested that the Acholi, for the sake of peace and a return of their children, were ready to forgive the LRA fighters without their paying compensation, this was recognised as being a breach of tradition and also potentially seen as not applying a sense of justice which might leave former rebels open to private action in the courts. “If the government gives the rebels resources to meet the compensation, it would be better”. According to an LRA representative, it is clear that “there must be traditional reconciliation”. As one of the most senior Acholi priests said: “The rebels are bound to go through reconciliation. They are known to their families and therefore they are obliged to go through reconciliation”. There is no short-cut to the process of reconciliation for those fighters who have committed violence of any kind.

“Many youth are ignorant of this process (of reconciliation). ... There is still pride in our traditions. We need a programme to give the young understanding. Churches can help in this. We need courses for heads and RE teachers, organised by Churches and the DEO. But funding will be the problem”. Others also responded to this approach and, in Kitgum, key school heads from both churches are already taking up the issue. Such a programme could fall within the purview of the UNICEF commissioned assessment of the needs of returning children.

#### COMPENSATION & MEMORIAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Compensation is seen by Acholi as essential to clear the real sense of guilt in the offender as well as to heal the reality of the hurt and loss suffered by the victim and their family, thus enabling relationships to be restored as much as possible. Thus Acholi require those returnees guilty of offences to pay compensation, which traditionally would be provided by the extended family. In the current situation it is considered appropriate for an international donor to assist the community by supporting the returnees with sufficient funds to cover any compensation payments. On the other hand, the victims must receive something in compensation for their loss. The building of memorial primary schools in every sub-county would provide a visible benefit with which the victims’ families could relate. They could see in these schools a means, in time to come, to restore something of what has been lost - the prospect of an educated child.

It is proposed to extend this memorial primary school concept to Aboke, either in the form of a primary school there or in terms of a memorial facility at the Aboke Secondary School from which so many girls have been abducted. This would be at the discretion of the Aboke community, but would be offered by Acholi to heal this extension of the conflict outside the boundaries of Acholi. Symbolically, such an act of limited compensation would be representative of the need for wider reconciliation within Uganda.

Once the *Rwodi-mo* and the LC5s have agreed the procedures for reconciliation and a simple rate of compensation for each individual, possibly collating all violent offences as one crime of violence against society, they will require legal authority from the Attorney General. From the number of returnees determined by the lists of the Districts (see chapter 7) and based on \$150 compensation per offending returnee, the compensation fund could reach the order of \$2.25m. This would provide adequate funding for about 50 such memorial primary schools (see recommendation 7.3) and two memorial centres for the disabled. These figures need to be tied up in advance so that there is a real possibility of their being fulfilled and the programme is not left in disarray without a donor or with the figures not matching.

The choice of a single figure, of the order of the value of two head of cows, for all compensation payments by returnees irrespective of the variety and number of offences they may have committed will simplify the process. If a returnee denies committing any offence they should not pay compensation. Those claiming to be innocent of any offences should be reminded that, if false, there will be other former fighters who may give evidence should any case come to court in the future for which they will have lost protection by their recorded denial in this process. The main advantage of a single figure will be that the simple multiplication of the compensation figure by the number of known returnees in each sub-county will give the value of compensation to be accounted for. The number of returnees will be readily publicised (see recommendations 7.1 & 7.2). This allows for a balance of fairness, appropriate compensation to enable reconciliation and transparency for administering the memorial funds. There has been an additional suggestion from Acholi that every household could contribute to the overall compensation fund in the form of one large tin (*debe*) of sim-sim per household.

## COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION AND TRUTH

With regard to training and preparation in the community, “reconciliation is a process, not achieved overnight”. In Kitgum, World Vision has had a programme of “community counselling”, going to the

community and talking to them as to how to reconcile and enabling people to “own the children”. They have held 7 programmes in 7 sub-counties. “The children don’t understand this traditional approach. When a child commits a crime, the ceremony is done to help the child come out of his guilt, know forgiveness and know that the clan has supported compensation. The children must be made to see the effect of their actions on the community and the community’s willingness to forgive”.

In Gulu one group expressed concern that reconciliation was not the main issue, or at least was dependant on first bringing out the truth as to why the war started and why lies have been spread about the Acholi. Others believe that the latter has been done in part with the publication of the Gersony Report and both Government and Acholi seem now to agree that the initial trigger was the raping and looting effected in mid 1986 by some NRA/FEDEMU/UFM soldiers in Gulu and Nam-okora (e.g. see Museveni’s autobiography “The Mustard Seed” p 175) before discipline was imposed. A recent returnee from the bush notes that the LRA commanders object to the way the government has caused suffering in Acholi and that they particularly refer to the destruction of LRA Commander Otti Lagony’s home, burning down his house and killing his mother within. Several refer to rape and sodomy committed by the NRA in the past. The issue of burning of homes is laid at the door of the UPDF by many, although others also implicate the LRA in the recent past.

“Truth is necessary for reconciliation” and for truth to come out requires communication and the people need to be talked to. Some priests saw the parallel with the Word of God and the coming of Christ to create reconciliation. The Christian perspective on reconciliation complements the traditional approach and many Acholi referred to the two working together and expected the church to play a key role in preparation of the people.

The desire for the expected process of reconciliation to go deeply into as many areas as possible where there has been social break-down led to a number of references to the damage done by colonialism and also one reference to slavery. Many pointed out that the destruction of traditional institutions was begun under the British and that the British began the weakening of Acholi society and economy. These claimed that an apology from the British, for the denigration of Acholi culture and structures and for the under-development of Acholi and its marginalisation into a source of recruitment for the security services and for introducing the “martial race” myth, would have a positive healing effect in the present situation.

It is to be hoped that the achievement of reconciliation in Acholi after so much suffering over the last decade and through the 1970s will not open a pandora’s box of financially motivated claims by Districts

devoid of any intention of going through the painful process of self-reflection, recognition of wrongs committed, repentance and reconciliation. Non-Acholi have expressed the need for reconciliation to occur within and between many groups across Uganda. Those opposed to reconciliation and national unity may seek to seize on the stumbling block of compensation in order to try to hinder the spread of such healing within Uganda for the sake of maintaining divisive ethnic-based politics.

A priest trained in Anthropology suggested the following texts would be important resources for any training of trainers for reconciliation in Acholi:

Girling, F.K. 1960: "The Acholi of Uganda" H.M.S.O. London

Albert Lloyd 1906: "Uganda to Khartoum" London - refers to *mato oput* resolution approach in Acholi

J. P. Ocitti on Acholi Indigenous Education

Vincent Okot thesis on "Reconciliation: a moral therapy for Uganda"

Okot p' Bitek 1971: "Religion of the Central Luo" E.A.L.B.

Pellegrini, V. 1949: "Acoli Macon" Kitgum and a work on "Around the Fire with the Acholi"

Angelo Negri: "The Acholi of Uganda"

Crazzolaro, J.P. "The Lwoo Migrations" vol 1 chapter 13 & 15 on reconciliation

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**8 (a) The *Rwodi-mo* of Gulu and Kitgum should urgently engage in discussions with *Ludito kaka* and *Lawii-mon* and church leaders to establish an agreed common approach to a full *mato oput* reconciliation process covering all details necessary to obtain appropriate authority within the laws of Uganda by submission through the LC5s to the Attorney General.**

**8 (b) An international donor or NGO should be approached as a matter of urgency to support the traditional authorities in establishing the reconciliation procedures to be used in resolving the conflict.**

**8 (c) The *Rwodi-mo* may be advised to establish a simple compensation rate of a single figure (of no more than Ug Sh 150,000/=) which all returnees would pay irrespective of the number and degree of their offences if any.**

**8 (d) Teachers and NGOs should immediately begin a comprehensive educational programme, after adequate leader training, across all schools in Gulu and Kitgum which will help pupils to understand the principles of reconciliation, to respect the exceptional qualities of traditional Acholi *mato oput* reconciliation and to support the agreed programme of reconciliation for returnees in ending the war.**

**8 (e) Church leaders, opinion leaders and NGOs should immediately begin a widespread programme, after adequate leader training, of community and church meetings, using available communication resources, to sensitise the people of Acholi to the processes of reconciliation, both traditional and specific to the current conflict resolution, and to prepare the community to accept returnees.**

**8 (f) The LRA, the Government of Uganda and Acholi leaders can each facilitate the climate of reconciliation by voluntary admissions of institutional or group excesses and failures of the past.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 9

#### PEACE IN THE PLACE

#### ***9. Talks Agenda - Spiritual Aspect***

- 9.1 dealing with issue of past curses
- 9.2 dealing with issue of *lacen*
- 9.3 restraining spirit of destruction & revenge
- 9.4 ministry of community healing of bitterness led by Church leaders

#### CURSES OF THE PAST

There is a widespread belief that the war and suffering of Acholi is a result of curses placed on the Acholi by other groups. “Spirits in Acholi do not kill, but spirits from across the Nile are destructive. Acholi tradition sees this as an epidemic or sickness brought about by the spirit of destruction, which can use anything - gun, sickness or madness. We need to give this to people who can deal with this before we go to peace talks”. “When something has become an epidemic, such as meningitis or measles, an axe is put in the road to mark a quarantine which no-one may pass, being freed from normal responsibilities to bury one’s relatives. Then the blood of a sacrificed lamb will neutralise the power of the spirits of the dead”.

Some Baganda *lubaale* priests or elders are thought to have carried out a ritual and cursed the people of Acholi for their part, among others from across Uganda, in the atrocities of the Luwero war. Again, some elderly women in Bunyoro are widely reported to have cursed Acholi following the brutal murder of a pregnant woman near Karuma by one group of retreating UNLA Acholi soldiers in 1986 (see Uganda Church Association Newsletter 1996-97 pp 36-37). As a result of this information, the Gulu *Rwodi-mo* are approaching Kabaka Mutebi of Buganda and the Omukama of Bunyoro to ask how they may be reconciled and put right that which has been done in the past. In seeking to act on behalf of any

Acholi who have offended in the past, they are fulfilling their traditional reconciling role, accepting the group's responsibility for the actions of individuals belonging to them. They do not see it as their responsibility to call on other groups in Uganda to do the same for the offences which their members also committed in Luwero and elsewhere. Nor are their actions to be interpreted as acceptance of Acholi responsibility for the suffering of Luwero (see Chapter 3). The Acholi elders would be offering a moral lead for others across Uganda to follow.

### SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

Acholi believe that *lacen*, the spirit of a dead person mistreated in the world by family, relatives or society, is an evil spirit (*gemo*) and is the most dangerous and deadly spirit. "Because of many vicious deaths, there is a breakdown of spiritual peace". Dealing with a war situation, in which men expected to die, is seen as different from a violent death of an individual. "The current war is one of lawlessness and disorder - a war against society. If a ceremony is not performed, the dead will become *lacen*. We need to pacify the spirits of the dead so that they do not take revenge". When people are on bad terms with each other and war comes to an end, the whole situation must be cleansed.

As an LRA returnee expressed it, "the spirit that Kony has will always chase away *lacen* which fighters fear". This fear of the spirits of those who have died violently arises from LRA fighters feeling "ashamed of the atrocities they have committed and therefore do not feel secure because of the atrocities". At the 1994 talks, the LRA choir sang an appeal to all to repent, adding "whatever you have done, even if you have killed many, Jesus is ready to forgive". Responsibility is both personal and corporate. Kony, in his long speech at the 1994 talks, asked "who is to blame for the killing of the first-born in Egypt - the children of Israel or the Egyptians who were stubborn and God punished them".

Many consider that evil spirits are controlling some of the fighters. One elderly man when kidnapped was told by his captors that the spirit had told them to club him to death and started beating him. Then they suddenly stopped, saying that the spirit had told them to stop, and he was released. His view was that "if there is dialogue, that spiritual power of destruction will leave and the old spiritual power of good will dominate". He considered that to confront this will require "intercessionary prayer and ... much faith in the Spirit of Christ".

## SPIRITUAL POWER

The spiritual dimension is one in which many are asking for the churches to take a lead. As one priest saw it the government, and even many Italian missionaries, consider that the Acholi people are not religious, only superstitious. A former Anglican Bishop in Acholi, J.K. Russell, wrote a book entitled “Men without God?” which draws heavily on the writing of Okot p’Bitek regarding the spirit world and the links between the living and the dead. However, what is apparent is the pragmatic nature of belief in Acholi and the need to test the superficial level of words with the reality of actions. Thus belief in spirit powers depends on evidence of superior power in action.

It is said by some that LRA commanders recognise the genuine authority of some Christians from Pentecostal backgrounds whose lives show the real presence of the Holy Spirit and who do not compromise. Superficial Christians who hold to a distorted “prosperity gospel”, suggesting that suffering (e.g. of Acholi) is a result of sin and being far from God are not respected. But those who have personally suffered, either themselves or through the killing of their closest family, and who continue to live with faith, hope and forgiveness are respected for their spiritual depth and leadership. It is such Christians who have a ministry of healing and reconciliation at this time.

“For Christ has died, suffering with us and understanding our sin and need, and has risen offering us the possibility of new life, and is seated at the right hand of God in a position of supreme authority and power, yet he intercedes and pleads for us knowing our suffering and need for a new beginning and to find ourselves in a heavenly environment” (an amplification of Romans 8 v 34).

### **For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**9 (a) The *Rwodi-mo* should be encouraged to seek and offer appropriate reconciliation outside Acholi, providing a lead for others to follow across Uganda.**

**9 (b) Churches in Uganda should take a lead in authentic preaching and teaching in Acholi from a perspective of hope within suffering.**



## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 10

#### PROCLAIMING PEACE

##### *10. Talks Agenda - Public Event*

- 10.1 to bring national and international focus on agreement and the breadth of reconciliation
- 10.2 public statements of essential elements affirmed above
- 10.3 possible return of 1898 treaties between Acholi Rwodi & the British and passing on of these to government of Uganda
- 10.4 breaking of guns
  - 10.4.1 between Acholi & rebels
  - 10.4.2 between rebels & government
  - 10.4.3 between Acholi & government
- 10.5 drinking *oput* between same
- 10.6 mass destruction of weapons handed in (see 7.3)
- 10.7 *goyo oboke olwedo* - peace branches
- 10.8 slaughter of bull of peace

#### BRINGING IT TO A HEAD

A final public event is seen by Acholi to be necessary in order to give national and international recognition to the reconciliation process as well as to enable final group reconciliation to occur. While Patiko has historical significance for Acholi as the site of Baker’s defeat 125 years ago of the gang of Sudanese soldiers then ravaging Acholi, traditionally ceremonies involving clans from the east and from the west occurred at the dividing River Aswa. A suitable site could be identified near the Aswa bridge on the Gulu-Kitgum road.

Such a public event offers an important part in the healing process and in restoring the confidence and self-worth of Acholi. It is envisaged that an appropriate event would attract the national and international media. It would also promote the good image of Uganda as a place which can lead in

healing and reconciliation. It would need to be well planned with this in mind and in expectation of attendance by the international diplomatic community and media. It would offer an opportunity for the Ministry of Information and Ugandan journalists to work cooperatively with colleagues from the north and would do much to restore the negative public images of the area which have been promoted over the years.

Although there are differences across Uganda, it is felt by Acholi that many of the principles at the heart of Acholi practices are similar to those in other areas. “We should invite representatives from each area of Uganda to witness what the *Rwodi-mo* are doing in Acholi so that they can do similar things in their areas with different rituals but similar principles as to how to cool the situation and calm hearts of rebels, so that when they come to peace talks they are held in a positive way”. Such inter-ethnic sharing, paralleling the shared origins of many royal rituals, would contribute to national healing and unity after so long, from the colonial era onwards, of emphasis on differences. Moreover, so much that was good in Acholi and other Ugandan cultures was discarded in the colonial era as being backward and was not assessed for its positive attributes. As a result many educated Ugandans are seen as being “just like Western people”.

The presence at the centre of such an event of the President of Uganda would also do much to restore trust and give hope for the future. It would offer a perfect opportunity for all parties to mend bridges in a positive and non-confrontational atmosphere. The LRA choir, which sang the Uganda national anthem at the 1994 peace talks, might even lead the singing of the anthem as a sign of national unity.

On several occasions, Acholi referred to the need for the British to apologise to the Acholi - “for ruining our institutions; for keeping us backward; and for creating the “martial race” myth”. A genuine apology would have wide resonance across Uganda. A possible route to this, apart from potential rehabilitation and development aid contributions, would be the return of the original copies of as many one-page “agreements” signed with various Acholi *Rwodi* in 1898 and now currently held in the Public Record Office in London. Any modern reading of these “agreements”, translated from English to Acholi through the medium of Arabic by a Nubian interpreter, would challenge their use as a basis for colonial rule (for two examples see Appendix No 7). Such a return of perhaps a dozen documents would have a dramatic historic healing impact. The documents could then be passed on by the Acholi *Rwodi-mo* in the same public event to the Government of Uganda, perhaps to be held in the Parliament Building, as a willing commitment to the modern Ugandan state.

## SYMBOLS OF PUBLIC HEALING

The slaughter of a “bull of peace” traditionally occurs at such inter-clan or group events. With the sacrifice of an animal, each side exchanges the roast liver and kneel and drink *oput* together.

At a final public event some Acholi felt that the LRA effectively form a group of Acholi who could have a representative to drink *oput* with one of the *Rwodi-mo* representing the people of Acholi. This shared drinking of *oput* has resonance throughout Uganda and would be appreciated as an act carried out by the three “parties” of Government, Acholi and LRA.

With over a decade of fighting occurring “inside their house” between the Government and the LRA which has caused Acholi so much collateral damage, the Acholi need to “shake hands” with both parties “who have allowed their home to be damaged”. “The trust problem means that the Acholi and Government need to “break spear” together (*gomo tong* = “bending the spear”) for symbolic purposes for healing”. This draws on the traditional resolution between warring clans or tribes when a symbolic spear from each is bound together and then broken. “The LRA should be treated as a group with regard to the “breaking of guns”, firstly with Acholi as a whole and then with the Government”. Although the Acholi have been unwilling victims in this war and the Acholi and Government do not see themselves as having been at war, such symbolic acts enable the wider public to see that all parties are at peace with each other.

After completion of all compensation and reconciliation, “the final public statement of peace would be the giving to Government and to the Kony rebels of *oboke olwedo* by the *Rwodi-mo* who are clean”. This would provide a final “blessing for peace” which would send people out to win the peace for the future.

### **For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**10 (a) The Government of Uganda may wish to consider funding a major public event to bring a spotlight onto the conclusion of the resolution of the conflict, which would generate national and international praise and support.**

**10 (b) The British Government could consider returning the originals, while holding copies, of the one-page agreements signed between British officers and Acholi *Rwodi-mo* in 1898 and currently held in the Public Record Office in London, taking the opportunity of a final public event to hand**

**these over with acknowledgment of failings in the colonial era to appropriately recognise traditional institutions.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 11

#### PEACE TO THOSE OUTSIDE

##### *11. Extra-Talks Agenda - Peace Across The Border*

11.1 Outside the talks, there is a need for foreign governments to cease to fan local conflicts for wider ends.

#### THE SUDAN FACTOR

The “Sudanese factor”, based on the principle that “the enemy of our enemy is our friend”, is believed by Acholi to be capable of neutralisation. Given the unique resistance to Islam in Acholi ever since first contacts over 150 years ago, and Islam’s failure to penetrate Acholi other than in the person of a handful of Nubians, there can be no real fear that Islamic fundamentalists can influence Acholi if the Government of Uganda and the Acholi leaders can now combine to end this war through the proposed talks. The removal of this destabilising fear would be valued by the Government and is now within grasp and Acholi would readily co-operate with Government to achieve this. This would dramatically cool international tensions in this border area.

An example of the opposition of Acholi to Islam which was given is that, if circumcised, a man cannot marry in Acholi. The Sudan factor is considered in Acholi as a lame excuse by Government. However, Government feels that the agreement of the Sudanese should be sought and that there need to be parallel discussions with the Sudanese Government. On the basis of Government claims of Sudanese recruitment of 7,700 to fight in West Nile, the Government fears that the Sudanese might also recruit paid Acholi mercenaries to fight in Acholi. Yet at present it has not been payment of money, but supply of arms in exchange for co-operation in fighting the SPLA, that has created the Sudan-Kony link. The question is

whether the Sudanese factor must be sorted out in order to assure security or rather security sorted out in order to resolve the Sudanese factor. Acholi hold the latter view.

An LRA Lieutenant, in considering the potential for ending the fighting, urges that the Government of Uganda should establish positive diplomatic relations with Sudan in order to remove the external base and create conditions in which the war cannot continue.

Just as significant as the external Sudan factor, there is the issue of internal anti-Islamic political views, which has made Muslims the target of various accusations. The arrest of four Nubians from Gulu is seen by some Acholi in this light. In spite of their historic opposition to the Nubians the arrests generated sympathy rather than support in Acholi.

The potential of cross-border support for opposition groups as part of regional ambitions - Sudan for the LRA and Uganda for SPLA - is seen as a major source of regional de-stabilisation. An LRA representative, hinting at particular world powers, argued that foreign governments should not be allowed to back the SPLA through Uganda and that this needs to be addressed. Until 1972, it had been Israeli military support for Sudanese rebels which operated through Acholi. "Developed countries are responsible for de-stabilising third-world countries". Acholi elders asked that the international community should come in immediately to stop this international support for rebels on both sides of the border, in order to facilitate the environment for reconciliation. The apparent shift within the international community, giving a higher priority to resolving the war in Acholi, has given encouragement to Acholi after years of scepticism about the motives of some international powers.

While the Sudanese factor is a subject of discussion in Acholi, it is not as significant as some, particularly in government, make out. It is noted by many Acholi that the LRA managed for many years up to 1994 without Sudanese support and that they have clearly been able to operate within Acholi in 1997 even when "surrounded" by the UPDF.

It appears to Acholi that at last there is a confluence of interests committed to resolving this "local war" which has taken on national and international significance.

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**11 (a) No additional action should be taken to seek to influence strategic international involvements, which might simply exacerbate the situation during a period of dialogue.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 12

#### ROOM FOR PEACE

#### *12. Pre-Talks Agenda - Modalities Of Dialogue*

12.1 3 distinct parties to process: (1)government/(2)Acholi leaders/(3)LRA: plus international observers

12.2 Independent convenors, neutral location, independent Chair

12.3 Level of participation:

(1)team led by a Minister seen as at the core of Government

(2)reps of MPs+Rwodi-mo+church leaders+KM+technical advisers

(3)Political+Military:

plus those linked with future monitoring

“What is wanted is peace and justice which lasts - this is lacking in the country”.

#### THREE PARTIES

“If the rebels meet with government without the third party of Acholi elders, nothing will happen as the two sides have taken polarised positions”. There is a unanimous view expressed among Acholi that there are three distinct parties to any discussions leading to a resolution, namely **the Government** of Uganda, **leaders of the Acholi** and **representatives of the LRA/M**. There is as much to be discussed between the Acholi and the Government [such as (3), (4), (5.2.1.3; 5.2.2 & 5.2.3), (8.2.4 & 8.3.1), (10)] in which the LRA would have only a secondary input, as there is between the Acholi and the LRA [such as (6.2), (7.5), (8.2.1 to 3)]. The Government and the LRA then have less to discuss [such as (5.2.1.1&2), (7.3 & 7.4). Some aspects are primarily for one party to act on and report progress such as (6.1) for Government and (9) for Acholi leaders. A few items involve all parties such as (7.6). “If only the rebels speak to government, they will look at each other with suspicion. A third party can keep harmony. For example,

if the rebels bring in a significant point which government wants to reject or vice-versa, Acholi could emphasise its relevance for peace”.

While there was one suggestion that a meeting of elders, the *Rwodi-mo* or *Rwodi kwaro*, would provide the basis for dealing with the government and with the LRA, the majority were clear that the *Rwodi* should avoid any such potentially political role, although they should be represented. Rather the Acholi team should be formed out of the elected representatives of the Acholi Parliamentary Group of MPs, Church leaders and some of the organisers of the representative Kacoke Madit meeting of Acholi in London in April 1997, together with advisers selected for their relevant technical expertise. The experience of the Kacoke Madit organisers is that it is possible to call together those with different views in order to build consensus. While these discussions are in the remit of political representatives and MPs, reconciliation is the realm of the *Rwodi-mo*. However, representation should “avoid people who have personal interests in the outcome”. The Parliamentary Group of Acholi MPs has been earning the respect of MPs from other areas as well as across Acholi because of their ability to work together in spite of representing a full cross-section of national political perspectives.

The Acholi must choose their own delegation free of government influence. There were suggestions that the government seeks to use its cadres to select elders or representatives who are not recognised by the people. A seminar in Kitgum is said to have suggested forming a permanent body with regard to peace and justice, which itself could be the basis for appointing representatives. One politician suggested: “As the religious denominations are the most neutral groups, there could be 5 Church of Uganda, 5 Roman Catholics and 2 Moslems to form this peace and justice body. The *Rwodi-mo* are also not compromised by government”. Multi-partyists in exile argued for the inclusion in the Acholi delegation of a representative of each of the main Ugandan political parties.

The position in the talks of significant Acholi leaders with key government positions, such as the RDC Gulu, was felt to be that of advisers to the government team.

**The importance of including as equal partners each of the three parties cannot be under-estimated as no-one on the ground expects a lasting resolution if any party is excluded or their role minimised.** The respective teams need to include a balance of skills and knowledge and to comprise people who can handle such dialogue sensitively.

There have been suggestions from a representative of the LRA/M that they need to meet first with the Government before bringing in the Acholi leaders. On the other hand some on the Government side have suggested that Acholi leaders need first to meet with the LRA/M to understand their agenda and agree the process of traditional *mato oput* reconciliation before bringing in the Government. Others in Government have suggested that Acholi leaders and the Government are already able to meet to discuss the economic needs of Acholi and any issues of grievance. These various perspectives reflect the circular argument of which meetings are needed first, since in reality all parties need to meet in a co-ordinated manner as the issues feed into each-other. Initial contacts between the parties, taking place before the main talks, enable trust-building to occur which will facilitate the wider three-party talks when these can be arranged.

The reportedly tenuous links between external representatives of the LRM and the LRA fighters on the ground were strengthened by a meeting in July 1997. Government needs to be assured that those who claim to represent the views of the LRA can in fact speak for them and deliver whatever is agreed in talks. In seeking to clarify their perspective on an agenda leading to a possible resolution, any meeting of the LRA/M which can agree on its delegates will increase the potential for a resolution that will be binding. It is clearly important for each party to recognise the authority, status and representativeness of the other parties.

#### INDEPENDENT CHAIRMAN

“An independent Chair is necessary”. With regard to the choice of a Chairman for the talks, most favoured someone of international standing who has regional experience and independence and is known for personal integrity. One person was sceptical whether anyone from the “third-world” could be sufficiently immune from the temptations of financial inducement to remain impartial. One who had been involved in a good-will peace mission in 1986-88 noted that it took 2 months then to persuade the government of the need for a neutral chair, but the principle now seems acceptable to all parties. The 1988 talks were in the end chaired by an Acholi and the minutes noted that “Col. Kutesa NRA observed that he had already met the present Chairman to this meeting and he was confident that Mr. Vincent Olanya was the right person to chair the meeting impartially”. One who had been involved in the 1988 agreement emphasised not only the need for trust in any Chairman, but also the need for an “independent go-between who has the capacity to ensure compliance”.

### CONVENORS

The convenors need to be neutral and independent, providing a facilitating role without influencing the agenda. An international NGO with experience in this area could be ideal to work discreetly in the background. Kacoke Madit have been facilitating contacts in this regard and parties have been sounded out regarding such a neutral low-key NGO convenor. This has already prepared the ground for such a contribution to the process.

If LRA representatives, and for that matter independent Acholi leaders, are to travel to help with the process of peace, they will require assistance with costs from an independent source.

### OBSERVORS

The discussions “need British involvement because of its past colonial rule and U.S. involvement because of its international involvement”, although some questioned the close identification of these with the government and their failure over the years to recognise the suffering going on in Acholi.

There have also been requests for respected international NGOs with experience in the area and potential future involvements to be present at the discussions both as observers and with regard to potential future monitoring. These all create a potential partnership for peace which is sustainable.

### PROCESS

The depth of discussions initiated by Kacoke Madit in April 1997 and continued within Uganda by a number of Acholi leaders and further facilitated by this consultancy have now created an environment of near consensus in which formal discussions between the three parties is likely to bear fruit and deliver a sustainable peace with genuine reconciliation. However, it remains at a critical stage in this long process and all parties are encouraged to move sensitively respecting the positions of other parties both to the conflict and to its resolution. As always it remains easier to destroy peace than to create it.

The purpose of the three parties meeting in dialogue should be far reaching and seeking to generate genuine conditions for reconciliation, avoiding the traditional restrictive western approach of signed formal agreements which have minimal effect on the ground. What is recommended is a transformational process approach with actions and words building trust and initiating an environment which continues to develop within a practical active monitoring. Many of the issues raised in this report do not need to wait, and indeed are not waiting, for formal talks to take place.

The process of peace will no more end at the stage of dialogue and agreements than it will have begun at that stage. However such a meeting of the three parties will be an important milestone on the road to peace.

**For Consideration, arising out of the consultancy:**

**12(a) The LRA/M could convene a meeting to agree its approach to a resolution and the authority of its representatives.**

**12 (b) An appropriate international organisation or experienced NGO could be confirmed as convenors for the dialogue.**

**12 (c) Invitations to the three parties concerned, the Government of Uganda, Acholi representatives and the LRA/M, could be made to attend joint talks in a neutral location with travel costs being covered.**

**12 (d) After due consultation, an invitation to act as Chairman could be made to a suitable person of international standing who has regional experience and independence and is known for personal integrity.**

**12 (e) The Chairman, in drawing up the agenda for the talks, should insure that all areas identified as necessary for a resolution and listed in this report's chapter heads are covered to the mutual satisfaction of all three parties to the talks, either before or during the talks.**

**12 (f) The philosophy behind the talks should be that of reaching consensus through dialogue rather than compromise through negotiation, taking a national perspective summed up in the words “*For God and My Country*”.**

## **“THE BENDING OF SPEARS”**

### Chapter 13

#### TALKS AGENDA SUMMARIES

#### ***1. Consensus:***

- 1.1 resolution based on consensus
- 1.2 marginalising personal interests
- 1.3 persuading divergent external political interests

#### ***2. Dialogue:***

- 2.1 Relative advantage of non-military option since Parliamentary Commission reported
- 2.2 Clearly indicated recognition of need for real dialogue at the right level
- 2.3 no pre-conditions
- 2.4 mutual cooling period
- 2.5 avoidance of ultimatum style
- 2.6 avoidance of any name-calling language implying negative attributes to any parties or groups

#### ***3. Reversing Sense Of Alienation Of Acholi***

- 3.1 public admissions by government of any excesses/failures
- 3.2 positive communications from government concerning Acholi which have an impact on whole of Uganda, including accurate history avoiding ethnic scapegoating, (especially avoiding blaming the Acholi for Luwero rather than multi-ethnic UNLA under authority of multi-ethnic government and army leaders)
- 3.3 action (such as appointing a credible/able Acholi of whatever political views to significant government position)
- 3.4 building trust by sustained credible actions and statements
- 3.5 influencing press towards a positive attitude & affirming positive attributes of Acholi, e.g.:
  - 3.5.1 cultural opposition to corruption
  - 3.5.2 not easily “bought”

3.5.3 independent thinking and outspokenness

3.5.4 loyalty without sycophancy/flattery

**4. Economic Programme for self-reliance & development:**

**4.1 institutional and family rehabilitation**

4.1.1 rapid rural appraisal to assess community-based projects - enhancing current Gulu programme utilising *Rwodi kaka*, *Rwodi kweri* & *Rwodi mon*

4.1.2 ensure all households have basic equipment

4.1.3 oxen & ox-plough programme

4.1.4 programmes to rehabilitate infrastructure:

4.1.4.1 communications: roads, rail, telephones in trading centres & FM radio stations

4.1.4.2 health services

4.1.4.3 schools (highest priority to restore previous Acholi educational levels) n.b. ~ 300 teachers killed

4.2 **long-term strategic development programme** to invest in Acholi agriculture & processing, providing opportunity to demystify “martial race” myth

4.2.1 boosting Acholi traditional cereal and oil-seed potential

4.2.2 re-stocking requiring border security

**5. Guarantors:**

**5.1 at talks stage**

5.1.1 independent Chair

5.1.2 neutral observers

**5.2 at implementation stage** - requiring physical and moral force

5.2.1 monitoring demobilisation and amnesty - physical presence

5.2.1.1 international weapons collection team

5.2.1.2 international landmine clearance team

5.2.1.3 international training team for a new local police at sub-county level accountable to District Security Committee

5.2.2 **post-resolution** - moral authority involving

5.2.2.1 external monitoring presence such as international development NGO's

5.2.2.2 informal internal monitoring presence such as posting of non-Acholi professionals to both Districts

5.2.3 **institutional capacity** - e.g. Ugandan organisations such as UJCC Peace & Reconciliation Committee linked with international organisations

## **6. Resolution Of Offences/Amnesty**

6.1 clarification of amnesty for offences against state

6.2 providing time-bound traditional penalties for confessed offences under *Rwodi-mo & Lodito kaka* without breaching requirements of the constitution

6.3 traditional resolution of offences given legal validity if necessary through Act of Parliament

6.4 national applicability, not specific to Acholi situation

6.5 potentially approved before talks

## **7. Re-Incorporation Of Fighters & Abductees** (possibly including those returned since Jan 1994)

7.1 preparation of community (adults & children) to receive back fighters

7.2 short-term & long-term counselling by qualified counsellors under professional training team with one-to-one processing & follow-up

7.3 handing in of weapons to international team

7.4 reporting of known landmine locations to clearance team

7.5 reconciliation (traditional) back into clans with blood of lamb cleansing ritual & drinking *oput*

7.6 resettlement packages comprising:

7.6.1 employment opportunity alternatives of:

7.6.1.1 educational placement with fees paid to P7 and S4 equivalent

7.6.1.2 special residential education/training for disabled

7.6.1.3 vocational skills training with trade tools on completion

7.6.1.4 ox-team & plough for adults

7.6.1.5 trade tools for adults

7.6.1.6 consideration of option of military employment

7.6.2 ex-gratia resettlement grant paid in 3 annual instalments

## **8. Reconciliation:** *acknowledging responsibility -> repentance -> compensation -> reconciliation*

8.1 calming & cleansing rituals prior to process

8.2 individual Acholi confessions

8.2.1 recorded and secured internationally to prevent possible repeat convictions (see 6 above)

8.2.2 compensation paid to *Rwodi-mo* out of resettlement package

8.2.3 *mato oput* carried out with *Rwot-mo* & *Ludito kaka*

8.2.4 all compensation payments collated and used to build a memorial primary school in each sub-county of Gulu & Kitgum and Aboke sub-county (see 4, 6 & 7)

8.3 matching government admissions

8.3.1 possible compensation/re-stocking scheme &/or use of ox-team scheme (see 4.1.3)

8.4 *mato oput* between clans

8.5 external reconciliation (see 9)

8.6 “bending of spears” (see 10.4)

8.7 giving the blessing of *oboke olwedo* - peace branch (see 10.5)

## ***9. Spiritual Aspect***

9.1 dealing with issue of past curses

9.2 dealing with issue of *lacen*

9.3 restraining spirit of destruction & revenge

9.4 ministry of community healing of bitterness led by Church leaders

## ***10. Public Event***

10.1 to bring national and international focus on agreement and the breadth of reconciliation

10.2 public statements of essential elements affirmed above

10.3 possible return of 1898 treaties between Acholi *Rwodi* & the British and passing on of these to government of Uganda

10.4 breaking of guns

10.4.1 between Acholi & rebels

10.4.2 between rebels & government

10.4.3 between Acholi & government

10.5 drinking *oput* between same

10.6 mass destruction of weapons handed in (see 7.3)

10.7 *goyo oboke olwedo* - peace branches

10.8 slaughter of bull of peace

### ***11. Extra-Talks Agenda - Peace Across The Border***

11.1 Outside the talks, there is a need for foreign governments to cease to fan local conflicts for wider ends.

### ***12. Pre-Talks Agenda - Modalities Of Dialogue***

12.1 3 distinct parties to process: (1)government/(2)Acholi leaders/(3)LRA: plus international observers

12.2 Independent convenors, neutral location, independent Chair

12.3 Level of participation:

(1)team led by a Minister seen as at the core of Government

(2)reps of MPs+Rwodi-mo+church leaders+KM+technical advisers

(3)Political+Military:

plus those linked with future monitoring

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### Chapter 14

#### PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION arising out of the consultation

The proposals are summarised for consideration respectively by:

1. The Government of Uganda
2. Acholi, generally the District Authorities of Gulu and Kitgum and others
3. The LRA/M
4. The international community
5. Conflict resolution groups
6. General

1. Proposals for consideration by the Government of Uganda:

**2 (d) It could help if the Government of Uganda increasingly make public statements which prepare the ground for comprehensive dialogue for peace and reconciliation.**

**3 (a) The Government could help by using its influence to accelerate the trend towards putting the record straight with regard to Acholi in the interests of reconciliation and national unity.**

**4 (c) The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with academics, particularly from the north, could consider preparing plans for an “Open University of Gulu” which will have appropriate accessibility for those excluded by circumstances from Makerere University.**

**4 (g) The Ministry of Local Government could consider directing its Programme Management Unit for World Bank/UNCDF Supported Projects to complete an urgent capacity-building programme at LC3 level in Gulu and Kitgum.**

**4 (h) The Government of Uganda might invite a training organisation to contract to provide courses in project management.**

**4 (k) In tandem with any dialogue leading to peace and reconciliation, the Government of Uganda may wish to coordinate a meeting of potential donors to seek support for its programme of rehabilitation and long-term development for the area.**

**6 (a) Parliament should seek to expedite the Government’s Amnesty Bill.**

**6 (c) The Attorney General may wish to obtain the support of the legal community for a radical law enabling traditional resolution of violent personal offences to be effected in special circumstances of social breakdown and then advise on the way forward under the Constitution.**

**10 (a) The Government of Uganda may wish to consider funding a major public event to bring a spotlight onto the conclusion of the resolution of the conflict, which would generate national and international praise and support.**

2. Proposals for consideration by Acholi, generally the District Authorities of Gulu and Kitgum and others such as the *Rwodi-mo*:

**1 (b) Responsibility for coordinating and extending this network for peace should lie within the Acholi community, ensuring wide partnerships across Uganda to facilitate parallel activity nationally in the future.**

**1 (c) The seminal role of Kacoke Madit in facilitating a consensus approach to a resolution should be acknowledged.**

**4 (b) The LC5s of Gulu and Kitgum should agree a transparent and corruption-proof method of collecting compensation and using it to establish a memorial primary school in every sub-county and in Aboke and two memorial centres for the disabled.**

**4 (d) The voters in Gulu and Kitgum in forthcoming LC elections should be encouraged to recognise the long-term significance of electing strong councils to handle peace, reconciliation and development.**

**4 (e) The respective LC5s and RDCs of Gulu and Kitgum should urgently utilise rural participatory techniques to determine a portfolio of village-level micro-projects for collation and forwarding through Government to potential NGO and bi-lateral donors.**

**4 (f) The RDCs of Gulu and Kitgum should facilitate their respective LC5 in establishing rehabilitation and development priorities and determining realistic programmes within the parameters of potential donor interest.**

**4 (j) Authentic district records should be established regarding loss of cattle 10 years ago on which Government might base a reasonable re-stocking programme in compensation.**

**4(o) Acholi in the diaspora are encouraged to contribute their knowledge, experience and finance in the development of Acholi and Uganda following a sustainable resolution.**

**5 (b) The Districts of Gulu and Kitgum may wish to discuss with the Ministry of Internal Affairs the possibility of creating a community police force of about 110 officers for a limited pilot period.**

**6 (b) The *Rwodi-mo* of Kitgum and Gulu should now take advice in drafting proposals for how to deal with violent personal offences by traditional means involving confessions and compensation, for submission through the two LC5s to the Attorney General.**

**7 (b) The Districts, with World Vision and GUSCO, should draw up details of all returnees who spent at least 3 months in the bush between February 1994 and, say, December 25 1997, which should then be put through a comprehensive and transparent vetting process.**

**7 (c) Resettlement package options should be drafted and costed at an average of US \$600 per option, including overhead costs at say 5% and US\$200 for compensation payments, for**

submission by the RDCs of Gulu and Kitgum to the Government of Uganda. (n.b. total cost of packages estimated not to exceed US \$9m, including \$3m for the memorial primary schools).

**8 (a)** The *Rwodi-mo* of Gulu and Kitgum should urgently engage in discussions with *Ludito kaka* and *Lawii-mon* and church leaders to establish an agreed common approach to a full *mato oput* reconciliation process covering all details necessary to obtain appropriate authority within the laws of Uganda by submission through the LC5s to the Attorney General.

**8 (c)** The *Rwodi-mo* may be advised to establish a simple compensation rate of a single figure (of no more than Ug Sh 200,000/=) which all returnees would pay irrespective of the number and degree of their offences if any.

**8 (d)** Teachers and NGOs should immediately begin a comprehensive educational programme, after adequate leader training, across all schools in Gulu and Kitgum which will help pupils to understand the principles of reconciliation, to respect the exceptional qualities of traditional Acholi *mato oput* reconciliation and to support the agreed programme of reconciliation for returnees in ending the war.

**8 (e)** Church leaders, opinion leaders and NGOs should immediately begin a widespread programme, after adequate leader training, of community and church meetings, using available communication resources, to sensitise the people of Acholi to the processes of reconciliation, both traditional and specific to the current conflict resolution, and to prepare the community to accept returnees.

**9 (a)** The *Rwodi-mo* should be encouraged to seek and offer appropriate reconciliation outside Acholi, providing a lead for others to follow across Uganda.

**9 (b)** Churches in Uganda should take a lead in authentic preaching and teaching in Acholi from a perspective of hope within suffering.

3. Proposals for consideration by the LRA/M:

**2 (b)** The LRA could further enhance the environment for a peaceful resolution by scaling down its activities.

**2 (c)** The LRA could facilitate a peaceful resolution by totally avoiding human rights violations against civilians.

**4(n)** The LRM are encouraged to associate their thinking on an economic programme for the future of Acholi with that of the Government of Uganda and Acholi representatives from Gulu and Kitgum.

**7 (a)** The LRA should draw up names and details of identities of all fighters and abductees in their camps and under their command as of, say, December 25 1997 to be compared with the records held by the Districts.

**12(a)** The LRA/M could convene a meeting to agree its approach to a resolution and the authority of its representatives.

4. Proposals for consideration by the international community:

**2 (a) A relevant UN agency should be invited to approach the LRA in order to arrange to visit their camps in Sudan to assess humanitarian needs.**

**4 (a) The international donor community would make a major contribution to a resolution if it supported the use of aid as a means of reconciliation as well as for rehabilitation and development.**

**4 (i) Major donors should consider contracting an independent project coordinator to ensure quality delivery of relief and development inputs to the intended beneficiaries, working through local structures.**

**4 (l) Donor interest should be sought for a post-resolution ox-team programme costing in the region of \$6m.**

**4 (m) Priorities for a 3 year economic programme of rehabilitation and development need to be costed and agreed in order to match with potential donor & Government of Uganda support. An order of magnitude costings are suggested as follows:**

1. Providing up to 45,000 displaced families with \$60 basic equipment for resettling: (assumes \$60 can obtain direct from manufacturers 2x hoes, 1x panga, 2xjerry cans, 2x cooking pots, 2x blankets, and finger-millet/pigeon-pea/cow-pea seeds)	\$2.7m
2. Oxen & ox-plough programme for every 9 households to increase production:	\$6.2m
3. Government re-stocking: e.g. one Friesian-Zebu dairy cross-breed per 9 households:	\$2m
4. Veterinary services infrastructural support at county level: (e.g. m/cycle transport, solar cold chain, simple traditional quality accommodation)	\$0.4m
5. Sub-county memorial primary schools (within returnee resettlement packages see 7c):	\$1.5m
6. Two memorial centres for the disabled ( “ “ “ “ “ “ ):	\$0.7m
7. Communications: feeder roads & valley tanks: (c.f. Gersony: “transitional employment generation” of \$5m)	\$3m
8. “ : radiotelephone “Bushnet” data centres in 40 trading centres:	\$0.4m
9. Secondary School rehabilitation: say 10 @ \$150,000:	\$1.5m
10. Revolving Fund support for small-scale agro-processing enterprises (40 @ \$20,000):	\$0.8m
11. 16 tractors & spares and 8 diesel pumps to be placed at each of 8 counties for hire:	\$1.0m
12. Primary health care infrastructural support at sub-county level:	say \$4m
13. Repairs to rail: Soroti-Lira-Gulu-Pakwach:	say \$3m
14. Kitgum FM radio station and “handcrank” radios in every school:	say <u>\$0.4m</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$27.6</b>
Plus: balance of resettlement packages for returnees:	<b>\$ 6.8m</b>

**5 (a) The USA and Europe could be invited to offer their services as observers at any talks.**

**5 (c) The USA or a European state, alone or in co-operation, might be approached to provide one or more of the following to work with the Ugandan authorities:**

1. weapons collection team
2. landmine clearance team
3. community police training team

**5 (d) International NGOs invited by Government and donors to work in Gulu and Kitgum should be asked to liaise with any peace and reconciliation infrastructure as part of their legitimate brief in addition to their aid and development functions.**

**6 (d) An international body should be identified and approached with a view to fulfilling the role of recording confessions and compensations as a lasting legal record of this reconciliation, providing long-term security for and access to the records for legal purposes.**

**8 (b) An international donor or NGO should be approached as a matter of urgency to support the traditional authorities in establishing the reconciliation procedures to be used in resolving the conflict.**

**10 (b) The British Government could consider returning the originals, while holding copies, of the one-page agreements signed between British officers and Acholi *Rwodi-mo* in 1898 and currently held in the Public Record Office in London, taking the opportunity of a final public event to hand these over with acknowledgment of failings in the colonial era to appropriately recognise traditional institutions.**

**11 (a) No additional action should be taken to seek to influence strategic international involvements, which might simply exacerbate the situation during a period of dialogue.**

5. Proposals for consideration by conflict resolution groups:

**A. All parties contributing to the resolution of the conflict in northern Uganda - participants, promoters, convenors and Chairman, observers and monitors, and donors - are encouraged to build on the existing consensus approach and seek an integrated and coordinated solution by discussing the full range of issues with the three parties indicated in this report and avoiding any divisive and partial approaches.**

**1 (a) The emerging network for peace could now become more open in mutual acknowledgment of their complementary roles to achieve the goal of lasting reconciliation and peace.**

**2 (e) A bureaucratic Western approach to negotiations and bargaining which result in pen agreements worth only the paper on which they are written should be avoided and a culturally appropriate dialogue reaching a sustainable binding consensus on peace, reconciliation and development should be facilitated.**

**5 (e) The Uganda Joint Christian Council could evaluate its potential to become the main independent coordinating and umbrella body for the purposes of monitoring the peace in coordination with others.**

**12 (b) An appropriate international organisation or experienced NGO could be confirmed as convenors for the dialogue.**

**12 (c) Invitations to the three parties concerned, the Government of Uganda, Acholi representatives and the LRA/M, could be made to attend joint talks in a neutral location with travel costs being covered.**

**12 (d) After due consultation, an invitation to act as Chairman could be made to a suitable person of international standing who has regional experience and independence and is known for personal integrity.**

**12 (e) The Chairman, in drawing up the agenda for the talks, should insure that all areas identified as necessary for a resolution and listed in this report's chapter heads are covered to the mutual satisfaction of all three parties to the talks, either before or during the talks.**

**12 (f) The philosophy behind the talks should be that of reaching consensus through dialogue rather than compromise through negotiation, taking a national perspective summed up in the words “*For God and My Country*”.**

6. Proposals for consideration generally:

**1 (d) Leading multi-partyists within Uganda could help by liaising with known colleagues outside Uganda to ensure that they support and endorse the consensus within Uganda for a peaceful resolution through dialogue.**

**8 (f) The LRA, the Government of Uganda and Acholi leaders can each facilitate the climate of reconciliation by voluntary admissions of institutional or group excesses and failures of the past.**

## “THE BENDING OF SPEARS”

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amnesty International, Sept 1997: “*Breaking God’s Commands - the destruction of childhood by the Lord’s Resistance Army*” AI International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ
- Core Group on Psycho-Social Support, Aug 1997: “*Proceedings & Recommendations of the Workshop on Psycho-Social Support Programmes in Northern Uganda*” UNICEF, Kampala
- Crazzolaro, J.P. “*The Lwoo Migrations*” vol 1 chapter 13 & 15 on reconciliation
- Gersony, R., 1997: “*The Anguish of Northern Uganda - results of a field-based assessment of the civil conflicts in northern Uganda*” USAID, Kampala
- Girling, F.K., 1960: “*The Acholi of Uganda*” H.M.S.O. London
- Human Rights Watch - Africa, Sep 1997: “*The Scars of Death*” HRWA, 485 Fifth Avenue, NY 10017 - 6104
- Colin Leys, 1967: “*Politicians and Policies - an essay on politics in Acholi 1962-65*” EAPH Nairobi
- Albert Lloyd 1906: “*Uganda to Khartoum*” London - refers to *mato oput* resolution approach in Acholi
- Yoweri Kaguta Museveni 1997: “*Sowing the Mustard Seed: the struggle for freedom and democracy in Uganda*” MacMillan Publishers, London
- Angelo Negri: “*The Acholi of Uganda*”
- J. P. Ocitti on *Acholi Indigenous Education*
- Vincent Okot thesis on “*Reconciliation: a moral therapy for Uganda*”
- Okot p’ Bitek 1971: “*Religion of the Central Luo*” E.A.L.B.
- Pain, D.R., 1987: “*Acholi and Nubians: Economic Forces & Military Employment*” in Wiebe, P.D. & Dodge, C.P. “*Beyond Crisis - development issues in Uganda*” MISR & ASA, M.U.K., Kampala
- Pellegrini, V. 1949: “*Acholi Macon*” Kitgum; and a work on “*Around the Fire with the Acholi*”
- Russell, J.K., 1966: “*Men Without God ? - a study of the impact of the Christian message in the north of Uganda*” Highway Press, London

**“THE BENDING OF SPEARS”**

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACHOLI WORDS

DP	Democratic Party (in government 1961-62)
FEDEMU	Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda (former armed group associated with UFM & NRA)
LRA/M	Lord’s Resistance Army/Movement (post UPDA ~ 1987 to date)
NRA/M	National Resistance Army/Movement (founded by Yoweri Museveni & Y.K. Lule 1981)
UFM	Uganda Freedom Movement (former armed resistance movement in Buganda under Kayira)
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army (national army: 1979 - 1986)
UPC	Uganda People’s Congress (in government 1962-71 and 1981-85)
UPDA/M	Uganda People’s Democratic Army/Movement (1986-88)
UPDF	Uganda People’s Defence Forces (national army, formerly NRA)
<i>abila</i>	ancestor shrine
<i>ada</i>	truth
<i>gen</i>	trust or hope
<i>kacoke madit</i>	the great meeting
<i>lacen</i>	a dangerous unrequited spirit of a dead person
<i>lacwec</i>	potter or creator
<i>lakwena</i>	a messenger  (adopted by Alice Auma and her followers as “messengers from God”)
<i>lawii mon</i>	women’s leader
<i>ludito</i>	elders or elderly (singular <i>ladit</i> )
<i>mato oput</i>	to reconcile between parties by drinking a bitter root extract drink
<i>oboke olwedo</i>	branches of a shrub given in blessing
<i>Rwot</i>	chief (plural: <i>Rwodi</i> )
“-kaka	head of sub-clan or respected non-hereditary elder of the clan
“-kweri	literally “hoe-chief”, village leader on agricultural and land issues
“-mo	anointed (=mo) chief. i.e. head of the royal family of a clan
“-mon	= <i>lawii mon</i>
<i>tye</i>	to be present or exist. Used as part of a greeting
<i>yubo kom</i>	to cleanse the body after someone has caused another’s death