

The Children of Northern Uganda: The Effects of Civil War

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Abstract

The primary focus of this article is on the exploitation of child soldiers in the northern Ugandan civil war, and the effects this exploitation will have on future generations. It discusses the conditions of child soldiers living in Northern Uganda and utilizes the work done by Invisible Children and other non-profit groups to expose their suffering. The article summarizes the key issues involving the conscription of child soldiers in the Lord's Resistance Army and links them to the lack of health care and education of child soldiers, as well as the vicious cycle of poverty these children continue to face.

I. Introduction

Uganda's history has been ravaged by civil war and ethnic tensions. Beginning in 1985, the northern region of Uganda felt the effects of these tensions when war broke out between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Led by Joseph Kony, the LRA has gained power through horrific massacres and killings. The tension lies in Kony's radical beliefs of Acholi military extremism, and his rejection of trust in the Ugandan government. Kony's main objective is to cleanse Northern Uganda of the older generation of the Acholi people, and rebuild the culture according to his own ideologies.¹ In order to accomplish this objective, Kony chose to enlist an army of children who, through violent force, help him to exterminate the Acholi population.

Starting in 1986, both the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) began kidnapping and training children to fight their war.² In the first few years of this millennium, the number of child soldiers used in combat has drastically increased, catching the attention of a variety of humanitarian organizations such as Human Rights Watch, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Invisible Children, and World Vision.

¹ See Cheney (2005), p. 32.

² See Becker and Tate (2003), p. 2.

Although the LRA began pulling its troops out of Uganda in 2007, the after-effects of the war still remain within the children of Northern Uganda.

While Uganda has now achieved a state of peace, and the LRA has moved away from the northern Ugandan region, the effects of these volatile times still remain evident in the war's most vulnerable victims: the children. Lack of education and proper health care for Northern Uganda's children are rooted in the war and conflict that has raged between the government and rebel armies for decades.

This article presents the situation of children in Northern Uganda, the treatment and conditions in which child soldiers are trained, the effect this problem has on other aspects of progress in Uganda (i.e., health and education for children), and the preventative measures taken by some non-profit organizations to protect the Northern Ugandan children. The next section (Section II) provides a brief literature review. Section III provides some empirical background, while sections IV-VI summarize, respectively, the situation of children during the civil war in Northern Uganda, the after-effects of the civil war on former child soldiers, and the contribution of some non-profit organizations. Section VII closes with some forward-looking conclusions.

II. Brief Literature Review

The Human Rights Watch report by Becker and Tate (2003), entitled "Stolen Children: Abduction and Recruitment in Northern Uganda", laid the foundation for further, more in-depth research on the subject of child soldiers in Uganda. The report provides a brief history of the civil war, followed with first-person accounts from children and families who have been affected by the conflict. The report gives a balanced perspective of the conflict, not only reporting on the LRA's use of child soldiers, but also the Ugandan government's own corrupt methods of obtaining children to fight.

The Humanitarian Action Update Report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2008) provides an in-depth look at UNICEF's work in the regions affected by attacks by the LRA, including the progress made in the areas of education, health and protection against HIV/AIDS. The report focuses on the steps taken by UNICEF to protect the children in Northern Uganda from these violent attacks.

As the civil war in Northern Uganda gained momentum in 2001, many media organizations fervently pursued stories related to the war and the plight of the Northern Ugandan children. These stories came in the form of news reports, documentaries, undercover exposés, and first-person interviews. Through this heightened exposure, awareness of the issue increased worldwide, contributing to increased support for non-profit organizations like 'Invisible Children' and 'Children of Uganda'. The following are three influential examples of how media sources promoted a greater understanding of the civil war and the effects of this war on the children of Northern Uganda.

- In August 2005, *Dateline NBC* exposed the "night commuter" phenomenon of children in Northern Uganda. The children commute on a daily basis to safer areas

in the hope to escape abduction.³ Through shocking images, first-person interviews with night commuters, and a brief history of the LRA, the news program was able to provide a condensed, yet complete look at the issue. Further details on night commuters are provided in Section IV below).

- Boustany (2008) wrote an article, published in *The Washington Post*, confirming the rise in child abductions by the LRA. This article confirmed that these abductions had spread from Northern Uganda to other areas of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), including southern Sudan, Congo and the Central African Republic. The article draws attention to the fact that while the LRA began to pull out of Uganda in 2007, the group's terrorist tactics continue to control the lives of children and families (please see further details below).
- The *Invisible Children* documentary (released in 2005) drastically increased awareness on the issue of night commuters and child soldiers in Northern Uganda. Following its release, the non-profit group Invisible Children, Inc. was created to further increase awareness and advocacy on the issue. The documentary is broken up into segments, following the lives of children who are night commuters, escaped child soldiers, and casualties. The documentary gives a more extensive view into the lives of these children than that of a news article or TV segment, providing an informative and emotionally-moving piece of film.

III. Empirical Background

Given the lack of data specifically on children in Northern Uganda, this section provides some empirical background on the situation of children in Uganda and—for comparison purpose—also for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Obviously, the situation of the Northern Ugandan children is typically much worse than for the national average. To some degree, the missing data for Northern Uganda implies biased information.

III.1. Education in Uganda and SSA

Although the children of Northern Uganda were hindered by civil war and violence to obtain an education until 2007, the overall state of education for Ugandan children has overall been improving. These improvements provide the illusion of stability and safety for children in all parts of Uganda. As displayed in Figure 1, public spending on education (as a percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)) increased drastically in 2004, surpassing even the SSA average. Yet, during this same year, abductions of children by the LRA continued to rise.⁴ By 2008, the percentage of public spending on education had fallen back in Uganda, though it remained above the percentages of the 1990s.

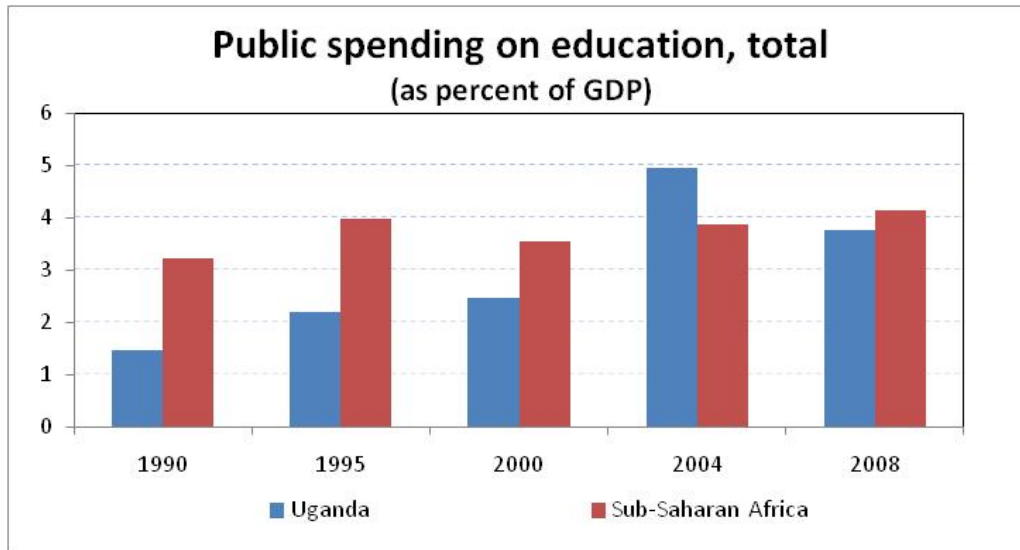
As shown in Figure 2, the percentage of children enrolled in primary school nearly doubled from 1995 to 2000, though it fell back a bit in the years after 2000. Secondary school enrollment (as percent) increased steadily between 1991 and 2007 (see Figure 3). Despite this progress, the instability of the civil war hindered the secondary school enrollment and

³ See Morrison and Sandler (2005).

⁴ See Moorhead, Rone and Stover (2005), p. 22.

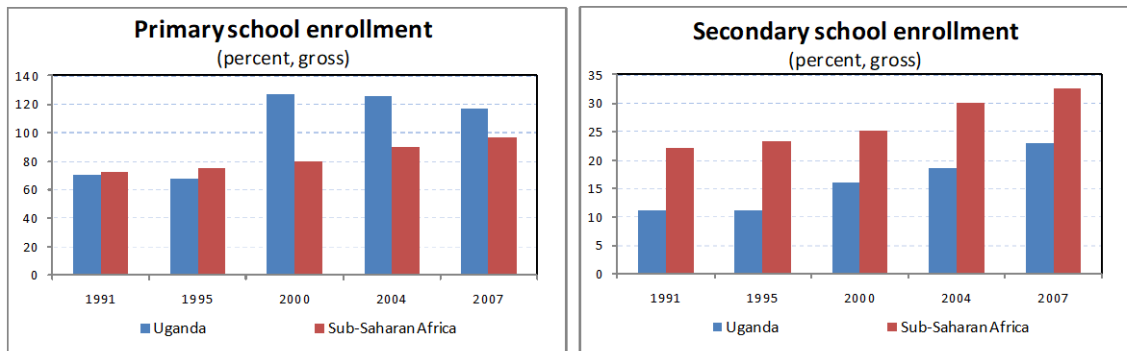
retention for the children of Northern Uganda. Because schools were a main target for LRA abductions, children had to live in a state of constant fear, creating an unsettling learning environment that even discouraged some children from attending school. Once abducted, children were obviously unable to continue with their education, which may be reflected by the fact that Uganda's secondary school enrollment ratios are far below the average SSA, even though Uganda had caught up with SSA in terms of primary school enrollment ratios by 2000.

Figure 1: Public Spending on Education (percent of GDP), 1990-2008



Source: World Bank (2010) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on May 5, 2010; the 2008 data for SSA is an estimate based on other years' data).

Figures 2 and 3: Primary and Secondary School Enrollment (percent), 1991-2007

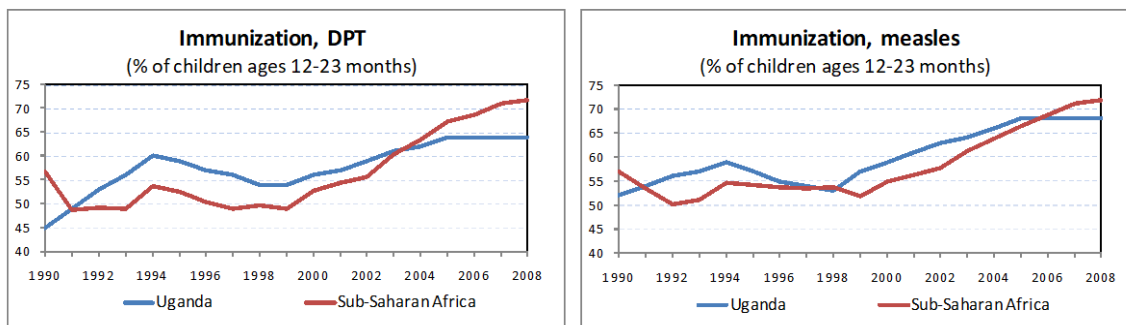


Source: World Bank (2010) *World Development Indicators* (as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on May 5, 2010) the 1995 data for SSA is an estimate based on other years' data).

III.2. Immunizations of Children in Uganda and SSA

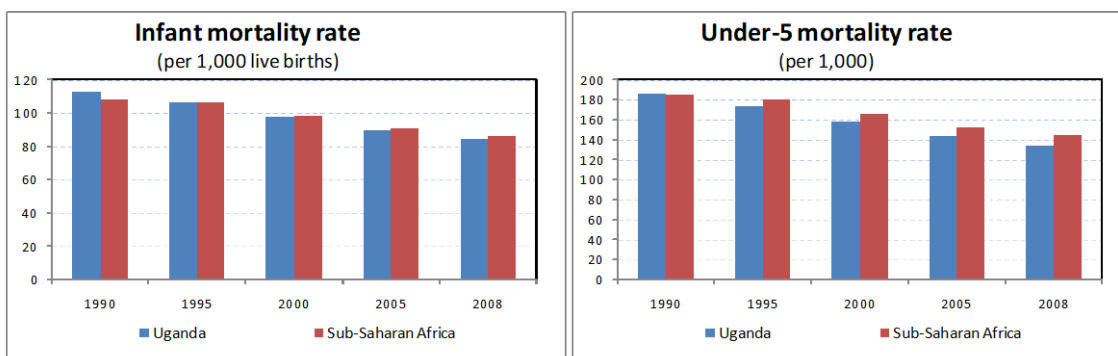
Figures 4 and 5 indicate an overall improvement in immunization rates in Uganda and SSA. Figure 4 shows the immunization rates against diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) and tetanus (jointly referred to as DPT) in Uganda and SSA from 1990-2008. Similarly, Figure 5 shows the same for immunization ratios against measles. Excluding the first few years of the 1990s, the overall trends in Uganda are similar to those of SSA. The data seem to indicate that the Ugandan immunization rates were higher than the SSA average during most of the 1990s, which may however be due to missing data for Northern Uganda. The figures show clearly that progress with increasing immunization rates have come to a halt in Uganda since 2005, which is partly due to including data for Northern Uganda. In any case, the immunization rates for SSA have started to surpass those of Uganda since 2004 (for DPT) and 2006 (for measles).

Figures 4 and 5: Immunizations against DPT and Measles (percent), 1990-2008



Source: World Bank (2010) *World Development Indicators*
(as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on May 5, 2010).

Figures 6 and 7: Infant and Under-Five Mortality Rates (percent), 1990-2008



Source: World Bank (2010) *World Development Indicators*
(as posted on the World Bank website; downloaded on May 5, 2010).

III.3. Infant Mortality and Under-Five Mortality in Uganda and SSA

Figures 6 and 7 above show the mortality rates of infants and under-five year old children in Uganda and SSA for most of the available years from 1990 to 2008. While both mortality rates have decreased in Uganda and SSA, the data seems to indicate that by 2008, Uganda has made slightly more progress in reducing these mortality rates than SSA. Still, these numbers are still far too high and the progress made is far below what the international community wanted to achieve.

III.4. Misconception of Progress

The overall improvements in education, immunizations and mortality over the past two decades reinforce the misconception that all of Ugandan children were reaping the benefits of these changes. The truth remains that up until 2007, the children abducted by the LRA in Northern Uganda as well as the child soldiers of the Ugandan government had to face severe physical and psychological health issues, which continue to have negative implications on their lives.⁵

IV. Situation of Ugandan Children during the Civil War

IV.1. Night Commuters

The emergence of “night commuters” in Uganda was a growing phenomenon among the children living in unprotected Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps and villages. Every night, tens of thousands of children would flee their homes and walk miles to city centers and protected areas in order to avoid abduction by the LRA.⁶ Sleeping in hospital verandas, bus parks, church grounds and in local factories, the children travelled wherever they could in order to feel a sense of safety and comfort.⁷ This aspect of life exposes the effect the civil war had on Ugandan children on a nightly basis. Although many of these children had yet to suffer the fate of becoming child soldiers, the night commuters are living in a horrible reality, in constant fear of abduction or death, with no one to protect them but themselves. As shown in the *Invisible Children* documentary, not only does this commute threaten Ugandan children’s stability, but it also a) deters the advancement of education and b) increases the likelihood of children engaging in unprotected sex at early ages (as many lack the knowledge of safe sex methods).⁸

IV.2. Abductions

Since 1987, it is estimated that 20,000 children have been abducted by the LRA and subsequently been forced to become child soldiers under Joseph Kony’s leadership.⁹ These abductions usually occur in heavily populated IDP camps, small villages or even schools in the Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum, and Pader regions of Uganda (also referred to as Acholi-land), indicated in Figure 8.

⁵ For further details, see Angucia (2009) and Corbin (2008).

⁶ See Morrison and Sandler (2005).

⁷ See Becker and Tate (2003), p. 6.

⁸ See Russell, Bailey and Poole (2005).

⁹ See Boustany (2008).

Schools in particular are a common location in which abductions occurred, as they were one of the few symbols of state presence in the north outside of military bases.¹⁰ Through mass violence and intimidation the LRA soldiers were then able to conscript new members into their ranks. Janet M., a twelve year old abducted by the LRA in November 2002, reflects on her abduction experience: “Thirty-two were abducted from the village, both children and adults. I was the youngest, at age twelve. The next day they divided up the captives, and told the old people, including my father, to lie down on the ground. They started beating them with a machete. They cut him badly and left him there.”¹¹

Figure 8: Mapping of Abduction



Source: Pham, Vinck and Stover (2008), Figure 3 (based on the data provided by the Database Project of the Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations).

The LRA targets children because they are easier to control and indoctrinate. By taking advantage of the authoritarian structure in which most children are brought up (both in schools and families) the LRA soldiers were able to instantly influence and mold the identities of the abducted children.¹² The LRA's version of this authoritarian structure is one in which punishment is taken to the extreme, and the children learn obedience and discipline quickly. In this environment, the children were then trained to kill other civilians without hesitation.

IV.3. Conditions in the Bush

Following abduction, the LRA immediately began to desensitize the children by exposing them to brutal acts of violence. During initiation, the LRA soldiers regularly beat the newly abducted children with sticks, the butt of their weapons and other instruments. Children must also bare witness to the killings of other abducted children. Sometimes they were even forced to watch the murder of their own siblings: “Early on when my brothers and I were captured, the LRA explained to us that all five brothers could not serve in the LRA

¹⁰ See Cheney (2005), p. 34.

¹¹ See Becker and Tate (2003), p. 7.

¹² See Cheney (2005), p. 33.

because we would not perform well. So they tied up my two youngest brothers and invited us to watch. Then they beat them with sticks until the two of them died. They told us it would give us strength to fight. My youngest brother was nine years old.”¹³

Derluyn, Broekaert, Schuyten and de Temmerman (2004) provide the type and frequencies of traumatic experiences during abduction among a sample of 301 children who were abducted and conscripted into the LRA. The statistics taken from the study (shown in Table 1) provide a gruesome look into the treatment of child soldiers through an extreme authoritarian structure.

Table 1: Type & Reported Frequencies of Traumatic Experiences during Abduction

	Number (%) of respondents (n=301)
Had to carry heavy loads	166 (55%)
Was seriously beaten	156 (52%)
Got injured	143 (48%)
Witnessed somebody being killed	233 (77%)
Personally killed another person	118 (39%)
Had to stay in difficult circumstances in Sudan	184 (61%)
Had to drink urine	49 (27%)*
Had to loot properties and burn houses of civilians	189 (63%)
Had to abduct other children	116 (39%)
Was forced into military training	195 (65%)
Had to fight	193 (64%)
Was sexually abused (“given as wife”)	21 (35%)†
Gave birth to one or more children in captivity	11 (18%)†

*Percentage of those who stayed in Sudan; none of the children who did not spend time in Sudan reported this experience. †Percentage of girls; boys did not respond to this question.

Source: Derluyn, Broekaert, Schuyten and de Temmerman (2004), Table 2, p. 862.

IV.4. Treatment of Girls

While boys are trained to become fighters, the majority of girls abducted by the LRA serve as slaves for the LRA commanders. The LRA utilizes a hierarchical, family-like structure in the bush, in which the commanders’ wives act as the heads of family in which all abductees are placed as “siblings”.¹⁴ Younger girls assume the position of servants to the commanders of whom they are assigned.¹⁵ Their role ultimately consists of cooking, cleaning, carrying large loads, fetching firewood, and attending to the whims of their

¹³ See Becker and Tate (2003), p. 5.

¹⁴ See Cheney (2005), p. 34.

¹⁵ See Becker and Tate (2003), p. 13.

commanders. According to Abigail Leibig (2005), girls comprise 20 to 30 percent of the child soldiers recruited and abducted in Northern Uganda.

Once a girl has reached puberty, they typically assume the role of “wife” to the commander. These girls act as sex slaves, and are repeatedly raped, often bearing the children of the men who have taken advantage of them. Of the estimated 7,500 girls abducted by the LRA, some 1,000 have conceived children while captive in the bush.¹⁶ In the scholarly article “Our Children Have Only Known War”, Kristin E. Cheney (2005) gathers two first-hand accounts of life in the LRA. One is given by a girl named Chancy, who escaped captivity after experiencing horrific atrocities: “I was so scared [to go to the commander], but I could not refuse. I had seen a girl refuse to go to a man. She was beaten so bad and she was tied on a tree to be shot... When she was about to be killed, she went to him.”¹⁷

Not only do “wives” of LRA commanders fall victim to rape and sexual assault, they also become more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDS) during their time in captivity. Although the rate of HIV infection among the abducted children is unknown, various non-profit groups based in Northern Uganda have recognized a need for HIV/AIDS testing in former abductees. World Vision’s rehabilitation center recorded eighty-three children in 2002 being tested for HIV/AIDS; of those eighty-three, thirteen (seven boys and six girls) were found to be HIV-positive.¹⁸

V. After-effects of War on Former Child Soldiers

While many of the children abducted by the LRA die in the bush, some find ways to escape from the army and return to civilization. However, the effects of their time in captivity are evident in their poor health and lack of education, creating significant obstacles for reintegration into their communities.

V.1. After-effects on Health

Following their return from the bush, former abductees suffer from both physical and psychological health issues. As captured in the *Invisible Children* documentary, physical casualties can include knife and bullet wounds, blindness, amputation of limbs, and starvation.¹⁹ While these physical casualties can be easily recognized among former child soldiers, the psychological issues that plague these children are more common and less easily identified. Often these psychological issues are not addressed due to the limited resources of the child’s environment. Of 71 children who agreed to be tested for post-traumatic stress disorder, 69 had clinically significant symptoms. Twenty-three of these children had lost their mother, a critical factor in the severity of their personal disorders.²⁰

Without addressing the psychological issues which plague these children, they will forever retain the memory of the horrors they experienced in captivity, hindering their mental

¹⁶ See Mogwanja (2006), p. 2.

¹⁷ See Cheney (2005), p. 28.

¹⁸ See Becker and Tate (2003), p. 14.

¹⁹ See Invisible Children, Inc. (undated-1) “History of the War”, San Diego, CA: Invisible Children Inc., website resource; available at: <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/history-of-the-war>.

²⁰ Anonymous (2004), p. 831.

growth and societal reintegration. A study done by Annan, Brier and Aryemo (2009) found a correlation between age, length of abduction and the problems faced in the community and family, following their reintegration into society. Table 2 on the next page provides further details.

Table 2: Age, Abduction Status and Return Experiences of Participants

Name	Age	Length of Abduction	Age at Abduction	Reported Family Problems on Survey	Reported Community Problems on Survey
Matthew ^a	18	3 years	13		yes
Samuel	25	6 months	18		yes
Michael	20	1 day	9		
Okello	23	1 week	14		
Geoffrey	25	2 years	19		
Bongomin	25	10 years	12		yes
Simon	25	2 days	22		
Christopher	17	4 days	6		
Olweny	26	4 months	24		yes
Mark	20	3.5 years	13	yes	yes
David	15	1 year	13		yes
Adam	15	1 year	13	yes	yes
Ojok	28	3 weeks	19		
Timothy	18	8 years	9		yes
Komakech	17	6 months	15	yes	yes
James	28	4 years	21		
Richard	30	2 months	23		
John	28	3.5 years	13		yes
Paul	15	2.5 years	11		
Otim	15	3 years	11		yes
Peter	22	5.5 years	15		yes
Ojok	20	1 year	13		
Ayella	20	2 years	13	yes	yes

a. All names are pseudonyms to protect the participants' identity.

Source: Annan, Brier and Aryemo (2009), Table 2, p. 646.

V.2. After-effects on Education

Former abductees are not only faced with the obstacles of health issues when released from captivity, but are also found to be less educated in comparison to those their age who had not been abducted. The LRA mainly targets children between the ages of 8 and 16, a period in which most children are receiving their primary and secondary education in Uganda. A study by Bayer, Klasen and Adam (2007) exposed this lack of education in child soldiers.

As the fifth column of Table 3 shows, of the 58 former Ugandan child soldiers selected for the study, 55 had attended primary school, but none had the opportunity to pursue a secondary school education.

Table 3: Demographic and Social Variables of Former Ugandan Child Soldiers

	Total (n = 169)	Boys (n = 141)	Girls (n = 28)	Uganda (n = 58)	Congo (n = 111)
Sex, No. (%)					
Boys	141 (83.4)			35 (60.3)	106 (95.5)
Girls	28 (16.6)			23 (39.7)	5 (4.5)
Age, mean (SD) [range], y	15.3 (1.6) [11-18]	15.3 (1.6) [11-18]	15.5 (1.7) [13-18]	14.5 (1.8) [11-18]	15.8 (1.3) [12-18]
Age at becoming child soldier, mean (SD) [range], y	12.1 (2.0) [5-18]	11.9 (1.9) [5-17]	12.7 (2.4) [9-18]	11.7 (2.5) [5-18]	12.2 (1.6) [9-17]
Duration being a child soldier, mean (SD) [range], mo	38.3 (24.1) [0-96]	39.3 (23.5) [0-96]	33.2 (26.6) [0-96]	32.5 (27.6) [0-96]	41.3 (21.5) [2-96]
Period since demobilization, mean (SD) [range], mo	2.3 (2.4) [0-18]	2.4 (2.5) [0-18]	1.9 (1.7) [0-7]	1.9 (1.9) [0-8]	2.5 (2.6) [0-18]
Education, No. (%)					
No school	40 (23.7)	38 (27.0)	2 (7.1)	3 (5.2)	37 (33.3)
Primary school	125 (74.0)	100 (70.9)	25 (89.3)	55 (94.8)	70 (63.1)
Secondary school	4 (2.4)	3 (2.1)	1 (3.6)	0	3 (2.7)
Ethnicity, No. (%)					
Acholi	54 (32.0)	32 (22.7)	22 (78.6)	54 (93.1)	0
Hunde	21 (12.4)	19 (13.5)	2 (7.1)	0	21 (18.9)
Muhutu	49 (29.0)	47 (33.3)	2 (7.1)	0	49 (44.1)
Mushi-Congo	18 (10.7)	18 (12.8)		0	18 (16.2)
Nande	10 (5.9)	9 (6.4)	1 (3.6)	0	10 (9.0)
Other	17 (10.1)	16 (11.3)	1 (3.6)	4 (6.9)	13 (11.7)

Source: Bayer, Klasen and Adam (2007), Table 1, p. 557.

This lack of education during such a critical time of learning significantly hinders former abductees economically after their return. A study by Annan, Brier and Aryemo (2009), published in the *Journal of Adolescent Research*, found that former child soldiers were less motivated to return to school or begin work in order to earn an income and support themselves. Of the 741 males studied, 45 percent did not return to school, and only 54 percent of this group has worked at least a day in the last week earning less than 75 cents per day.²¹

VI. Contributions of Some Non-Profit Groups

VI.1. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF has been one of the leaders in the battle for children’s civil rights in Northern Uganda. After a surge of brutal LRA attacks in 2002, UNICEF worked with the news media to expose the issue of child soldiers. However, UNICEF discovered an obstacle in that they wanted to minimize the risk to the child soldiers they found in the LRA, and treat these “children as children.”²² According to Ugandan army spokesperson Shaban Bantariza, this idea hindered UNICEF’s work during the civil war: “UNICEF has a problem. They don’t know what children they are talking about... Our situation is such that we cannot talk about children. Children need not simply be referred to as children.”²³

²¹ See Annan, Brier and Aryemo (2009), p. 647.

²² See Cheney (2005), p. 36.

²³ See Cheney (2005), p. 36.

According to Cheney (2005), the LRA takes advantage of UNICEF's ideologies on childhood, and works these beliefs to their advantage. The army will refer to the soldiers as "children" whenever the Ugandan government army "rescues" or shows any progress in doing so. However, when an LRA soldier successfully executes an attack or are killed by the Ugandan government army are referred to as "rebels" so they can disregard the fact that these rebels were also abducted children.

VI.2. Invisible Children

In 2003, filmmakers Jason Russell, Bobby Bailey and Laren Poole traveled to Africa to document the lives of night commuters, former child soldiers and casualties affected directly by the violence in order to expose an issue of which many in the world were not aware.²⁴ The release of their documentary, *Invisible Children*, spawned the creation of Invisible Children, Inc., a non-profit committed to spreading awareness on the atrocities they witnessed in Northern Uganda. Since the non-profit's emergence, the group has worked to raise over \$6 million towards aiding the effected children.²⁵ This fundraising has been done primarily through the organizations website, which offers a variety of ways donors can help make a difference for very little money. Invisible Children is one of the most successful organizations at increasing the awareness of young people in the western world on the fate of invisible children in Uganda and elsewhere.

VI.3. World Vision

World Vision, a Christian organization that runs the Gulu Children of War Rehabilitation Center, works to address not only the immediate needs but also the long-term needs of all children affected by the war which includes prevention, demobilization, and reintegration of child soldiers.²⁶ This work includes education, health care and shelter for former abductees, regardless of age. In the Rehabilitation Center, the LRA escapees are referred to as "students" who engage in "classes" including individual and group counseling, health education, children's rights, drawing, singing, dancing, debate and storytelling. All of these activities serve as a psychosocial form of therapy which helps to better reintegrate the "students" into society and achieve a sense of normalcy post-abduction.

VII. Conclusion: A More Promising Future

Starting in 2007, the LRA began to dissipate in Northern Uganda and spread to the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and southern Sudan. The Ugandan government has already made progress in achieving protection for the Northern Ugandan region, including pursuing peace talks with Joseph Kony.

In a landmark bill passed by the United States Congress in May 2010, the United States committed itself to developing a comprehensive strategy in addressing the violence of the

²⁴ See Invisible Children, Inc. (undated-1) "History of the War", San Diego, CA: Invisible Children Inc., website resource; available at: <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/history-of-the-war>.

²⁵ See Hall and Panepento (2007).

²⁶ See World Vision (2010).

LRA.²⁷ The *Lord's Resistance Army and Northern Ugandan Recovery Act* will “help strengthen state presence and capacity in these regions to the benefit of vulnerable civilian populations who have long suffered in the hands of the LRA”.²⁸

Non-profit groups, including Invisible Children, UNICEF, World Vision and others, are still working actively in the region to restore quality of life for the Northern Ugandan children. Their efforts have contributed to the implementation of the following programs in and surrounding the region:

- Invisible Children’s Schools for Schools Program is a competition among schools across the United States to help fund raiser for the rebuilding of the eleven best secondary schools in Northern Uganda.²⁹ This program not only promotes the pursuit of education by Northern Ugandan children affected by the war, but also encourages awareness on the issue in American school children across the country.
- The HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Prevention Program sponsored by World Vision (2009) helps to treat the Northern Ugandan affected by disease and psychological disorders due to the war. The goals of the program include providing nutritional, clean-water and sanitation, and income-generating initiatives, as well as the training of 900 health workers.

With action taken by the Ugandan government, support from the United States government and other bilateral as well as multilateral donors, and new program initiatives introduced by non-profit groups, the children of Northern Uganda can finally get closer to secure the protection and representation they need and begin their journey on the long road to recovery and peace.

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²⁷ See Prendergast (2010).

²⁸ See Prendergast (2010).

²⁹ See Invisible Children Inc. (undated-2), “Uganda Programs: Schools for Schools”, San Diego, CA: Invisible Children Inc., internet resource; see: <http://s4s.invisiblechildren.com/>.

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