

AZIKU SANTUS (2007-MO93-10084)

The Impact of the Conflict in Northern Uganda on the Traditional Livelihood of the Population of Pader District in Acholi Sub Region: A Case Study of Patongo Sub-County

Acholi sub region in Northern Uganda including Patongo sub-county in Pader district has suffered from unprecedented insecurity since the mid 1980's. For over twenty years, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and its predecessor insurgents have waged a civil war against the Government of Uganda and terrorised the civilian population of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader and parts of neighbouring districts like Lira, Soroti and Kotido. The vicious attacks of the LRA led to massive displacement and adversely compromised the incomes and overall quality of life of the population that largely depended on agriculture for its livelihood. This research attempts to assess into depth the impact of this conflict on the traditional livelihood strategies of the local population particularly that of Pader sub-county. It attempted to do this by answering four specific research questions namely - What were the traditional livelihood strategies of the local population in Patongo sub-county? How were these traditional livelihood strategies affected by the armed conflict? What were the effects of the disruption of the traditional livelihood strategies on the local population? And what are the options for reconstruction of the people's livelihood? The conclusions drawn from this study reveal that: access to farm land, crop production, livestock rearing, social capital, trade/markets, and traditional skills and knowledge were the main components of the traditional livelihood strategy of the local people of Patongo sub-county. By displacing the population while leading to destruction of property and social capital; loss of productive assets, markets, trade and employment opportunities; deprivation from basic services and restriction of movement, the conflict completely disrupted and separated the local population from their traditional sources of livelihood. This disruption and separation consequently led to depletion of the people's productive assets, dependence on humanitarian assistance for basic survival and above all adaptation of new livelihood strategies as a coping mechanism. The population became economically unable to participate in the national economy, adequately provide their own needs and educate their children. The research also concludes that, it is possible to rebuild the people's livelihood and improve the overall quality of life. The people themselves believe that, their traditional livelihoods would be restored if they could have access to their own farm land and there is restocking of their lost animals; if they continue to receive food aid and be supported with house hold supplies and cash as they resettle while at the same time the government rehabilitates the social infrastructure and provides basic social services.

Keywords: Conflict, Traditional Livelihood, Acholi Sub-region