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Dynamics of Captivity and Post Captivity Experiences and Implication for Social Reintegration of the Formerly Abducted Young Mothers in Kitgum District, Northern Uganda

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Abstract

Uganda's two decades insurgency (1986-2006) in Northern Uganda between the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government and rebels under Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has seen forceful conscription of children in the rebel's army among whom were girls. The girls were either raped or forced to become wives of LRA rebels and bore children during captivity and later returned to Uganda with these children. During captivity, they were not only forced to commit horrendous acts against their own communities but were also sexually exploited by the rebels and became mothers at a tender age. In this paper these girls are referred to as the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs). Upon return, despite many efforts from many actors, their social reintegration is still problematic. In this paper, we examine how captivity and return experiences shaped the FAYMs long term social reintegration in Kitgum district. We have relied on their individual narratives and those of the community members and key informant interviews from local leaders and social workers (Research Note: Please note that all names used to represent respondents are pseudo names). Findings show that exposure to horrific events in captivity, and negative perception by communities to which they returned have had physical, emotional and psychological impacts that impair FAYMs' association with their communities and their social reintegration.

Key words: Uganda, Formerly abducted young mothers, captivity experiences, social reintegration.

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Introduction

There are 120,000 girls conscripted in armed groups globally (Stevens, 2014). They are often used not only in combat roles but also serve as domestic workers and "wives" to male fighters (Carlson & Mazurana, 2008; Stevens, 2014; Dudenhofer, 2016; Child Soldiers International, 2019). It is estimated that 40% of child soldiers are located within the African continent (Angucia, 2009; Mlambo et al., 2019) and are actively being used by warlords on the battle fronts to sustain ongoing conflicts. During the two-decade civil war in Northern Uganda (1986–2006) between forces of NRM government and rebels, it was estimated that the LRA abducted 54,000 to 75,000 people including between 25,000 and 38,000 children (Pham et al., 2008). Among the children abducted were girls, who while in captivity, were tortured, forcefully married to commanders at a very tender age as low as 11-15 years and bore children fathered by LRA fighters. Some of these children escaped or were rescued with their babies by government soldiers. Here we refer to them to as the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs). Their being held in captivity for years in the LRA have had significant long term physical and psychological effects that currently impact on their social reintegration. Many of them were subjected to committing atrocities against their own communities during abduction and captivity (Ehrenreich, 1998). Some were involved in combat and witnessed and perpetrated atrocities (Amone-P'Olak et al, 2014).

In this paper we answer one broad research question:

How does the captivity and post captivity experiences limit the social reintegration of FAYMs in Kitgum district?

The current scholarship on return and social reintegration of the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) lacks literature on the underlying causes of social reintegration challenges especially in the light of reintegration interventions that have been going on in the region. There is a dearth of information on details of familial and community social reintegration challenges that the FAYMs face. But most importantly there are limited studies that interrogate how the captivity and past captivity experiences facilitate social reintegration challenges. Existing studies such as Blattman et al., (2009); Annan et al., (2011) have focused on the consequences of armed conflict on girls and women, pointing to the effects of war experiences on schooling and livelihoods. Such studies point to lifelong consequences of conflict and wartime sexual violence for women's livelihoods and earnings, affecting, in turn, their ability to live in harmony with their family and society. They point out that women such as the FAYMs have limited options to engage in sustainable livelihoods owing to interrupted education and limited viable skills (Atim, Mazurana and Anastasia, 2018).

The aim of this article is to unveil deep-rooted psychological, spiritual and social barriers the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) faced in their daily life. We argue that these barriers emanate from captivity experiences and the manner in which FAYMs are

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being perceived, welcomed and treated by their communities and that this impacts on their social reintegration. Although this is beyond the scope of this paper, we believe that, knowledge of FAYMs captivity and post captivity experiences can inform intervention practices for addressing social reintegration challenges. There is enough research that show that support for social reintegration of former combatants and abductees following protracted war and conflict occur in the expectation that it will promote reconciliation with their communities for long term peace and harmony (Tegenbos & Vlassenroot, 2018).

Research has also shown that successful social reintegration of any ex-combatants will always depend on how their families and communities receive, perceive and accepts them (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2007) as quoted by Kaplan et al., (2015). Indeed, Stavrou (2003), Betancourt (2004) and Veale & Stavrou (2007) state that social reintegration is associated with the levels of family and community acceptance, family connectedness and social support; and these are some of the important protective factors related to reduced symptoms of distress among the former child soldiers. Mckay et al (2011) argue that family and communities play a key role in social and cultural reconstruction, and community support is essential for ensuring FAYMs social reintegration. Kitgum district is one of the districts that were badly affected by LRA rebel activity and one of the districts that has seen a return of FAYMs. Kitgum, it is more than a decade since the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) returned from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) captivity but they are still facing challenges in socially reintegrating in their communities. A total number of 24 FAYMs were selected for this research.

Statement of the Problem

After the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) either escaped or rescued by government soldiers from captivity and returned with their children (born in captivity) to their communities, they expected to be welcomed, but for a long time, this seem not happening, instead they are scorned, shunned and even rejected by their communities and relatives. This is even after more than ten years of reintegration agencies work in the region to rehabilitate the former abductees (Parker et al., 2020). Upon return to their communities, despite going through reintegration programs, the FAYMs continue to face stigma and rejection, and still struggle to socially reintegrate into their communities (Allen, 2020). They are finding it difficult to establish their social ties with the community (Mukasa, 2017; Tankink & Otto, 2019). In this paper we interrogate how the captivity and post captivity (return) experiences impacted on the social reintegration of FAYMs.

Philosophical and Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical and philosophical lens that shaped the inquiry in this research is drawn from interpretivism paradigm (understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it), in which the research participants' points of views were paramount. Using phenomenological approaches-the qualitative research traditions concerned with participants' lived experiences the study uncovers social reintegration challenges faced by formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) and the underlying causes of these challenges. We thus depended on the narratives of the FAYMs to inform the discussion in this paper. The narratives of the FAYMs helps us to obtain a holistic understanding of the lived experiences of the studied subjects (Creswell, 2007). To gain understanding of the experiences of the FAYMs we utilized a number of theories including the trauma-based theories and the community-based theories. The trauma-based theories helped us to

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understand how the acts of violence inflicted on the FAYMs as well as what they witnessed affected the relationships with the host communities and the overall behavior. The community-oriented theories emphasizes the importance of social relationships between family, societal members if social reintegration is to be achieved (McKay, 2004; Corbin, 2008). The community based theorists argue that what counts more is what happens after the former combatants are back in their communities although they acknowledge the physical, emotional and mental sufferings of the formerly abducted as a result of war effects (Wessells & Kostelny, 2018). Based on this, the level of family and community acceptance, family connectedness and social support become paramount for successful social reintegration of FAYMs.

Methodology and Methods

To answer the main research question, how captivity and post captivity experiences of the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) have impacted on their social relationships with their communities, qualitative research was deemed the most appropriate. As already indicated, from the philosophical point of view this research took an interpretivism stance, and followed a phenomenological approach. We utilized narrative inquiries and in-depth interviewing in obtaining data from the participants. Through the narratives and in-depth interviews we aimed at understanding of experiences of the FAYMs both in and after abduction- and how those experiences affected their social reintegration. When researchers are studying people, observing their experiences, and trying to understand their lives, narratives may come closer to representing the context and integrity of those lives than do questionnaires and graphs. In-depth interviews were used to collect data from local leaders, cultural leaders and Community members. In-depth interviews provided detailed information about participants person's thoughts perceptions and behaviors and enabled follow-up questions to gain a deeper perspective and understanding of the participant's viewpoint. Key informant interviewing was used to collect data from social workers. Key informants are participants experts, they have particular knowledge and have understanding of the social reintegration programs available to support the FAYMs.

Selection of Participants

The study population included the formerly abducted young mothers, Local leaders, Community Development officers, social workers i.e. former workers of NGOs and current workers of reintegration organizations, Cultural leaders and Community Members including family members of the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs). A total of 48 respondents were involved in this study. Twenty three (23) FAYMs were selected using snowballing method which is based on the uncertainty about the sample population. With some of the FAYMs having returned and settled unregistered it is hard to locate them without support from those who know them. Using purposive sampling, 8 local and 5 cultural leaders were selected. Local leaders provide a crucial link between the formerly abducted young mothers and the larger community because local leadership provides avenues around the acceptance of the FAYMs (Corbin, 2008). Four (4) social workers and 8 community members were also purposively selected as key informants. These key informants were envisaged to provide in-depth and detailed information about social reintegration of the FAYMs because of their personal skills, or position within Kitgum community, having worked on the FAYMs, they had the potential to provide information with deeper insight into what is going on around FAYMs.

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Data Analysis

This study borrowed from grounded theory methodology, an approach that allows theories to emerge from raw data inductively (Charmaz 2006, Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data was therefore analyzed inductively using line by line method, without entirely depending on pre-conceived themes embedded on my research questions. Therefore the inductive coding enabled new ideas to be generated so that the theories we had before could be expanded basing on the new insights from the data.

The transcribed data was therefore analyzed by coding the responses. We attached codes/labels to text passages. The aspects of text interpretation (codes), following the research questions was put into categories. Categories were codes that spoke the same language. The categories formed the basis for themes. Thematic content analysis was performed on all the narratives interviews from the FAYMs, in-depth interviews from the community and the key informant interviews from the local leaders, staff of reception centers and cultural leaders.

Ethical Considerations

This study was informed at all stages by the guiding ethical principle to ‘do no harm.’ We took care of the informed consent by informing respondents the goal of this study. The respondents’ privacy was highly secured through use of anonymous names in the study. The research was cleared at all levels including University REC (Research Ethics Committee), and subsequently by the National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). The Chief Administrative Officer of Kitgum District wrote to sub county chiefs of Labong Amida, Kitgum Town Council, Mucwini and Kitgum Matidi about our presence in their sub counties. Given the sensitivity of the study, we developed detailed procedures for mitigation measures to cater for psychological treatment for the participants that went through emotional breakdown as a result of the interviews. Arrangements with counsellor who had ever worked with reception centers in Kitgum to offer support the FAYMs who were to be re-traumatized in the process of telling their stories were made.

Findings and Discussion

FAYMs lives in Captivity: Indoctrination, Initiation and rituals

Results from the field reveal that after the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) were abducted, alongside other abductees, as part of the informal socialization there used to be the “welcome ceremony” for registering the newly arrived girls along other abductees.

Smearing of Herbs and Shea Butter

The formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) took part in the Shea-nut butter ritual and smearing of some herbs. The FAYMs along other abductees were told that the butter and herbs were smeared on their bodies to make them part of LRA family and make them forget going back home just in case they had the plan of escaping. Narratives from the study participants also pointed out that smearing of herbs aimed at protecting them from UPDF bullets. For instance Alagi (not her real name), the 23 year old FAYM, who lived in captivity from 2007-2009, abducted at the age of 14, gave some remarks about herbs and Shea butter:

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...They could sprinkle some herbs on us so that we could not think of coming back home...they also smeared us with Shea butter during battles, to protect us from bullets. They also made us believe that when we escape and come back home, our people will kill us. They said we belonged to LRA new family and indeed we felt so...

As seen in the above narrative from Alagi, indoctrination and misinformation were central to LRA retention and indeed children have higher susceptibility to indoctrination and misinformation, and find it difficult to escape. The above accounts of allegiance of FAYMs to the rebel group suggests that LRA discipline, religion, and propaganda did not simply change the FAYMs' 'encouragements', but fundamentally altered their beliefs. Kelly et al (2016) in their study show that they conducted in the DRC they stated that terror and the breaking of previous ties (in the abducted children) may take the form of committing the most extreme forms of violence against one's own community. Initiation serves to make new recruits feel isolated from their families. According to them this can serve to undermine earlier morals as well as make new recruits feel isolated and bound to a new set of values in the new rebel family. This makes the feel that the rebel family is their new family and a new home.

Such indoctrination, misinformation, and identity manipulation has been widely remarked upon in social psychology and military sociology. It can be argued that indoctrination of the FAYMs tend to consequently cut off all social ties between them and their communities and therefore complicating their social reintegration upon return because of the feeling that they do not belong to their families and communities. The cutting of social ties is clearly manifest in the stories of some of the FAYMs in how they express feelings of not belonging and because their family members fear them because they portray violent behavior, the behavior they learnt from captivity which has created fear in their families, and broken ties between them and their families. Below are the words of the same FAYM, Alagi after being asked about how the captivity experiences have affected her life in the community:

People in the community stay with me and when there is something I have done badly they do not tell me because they fear that I may do worse. Even those from home stay with me but they fear me. When I am sober I tell them.... you people I know you fear me but now I am changed and I stay like any other person so those things that had happened please forgive me for that. So that I can stay well with you....so that I can also feel free and happy (Alagi, the FAYM, 2018).

From the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYM's) words above there is a clear indication that the FAYM and community ties are weak, on account of captivity orientation which has instilled violent behavior connected with acts such as included assignments to loot and commit atrocities in their own communities. Similarly in a study that was done by Nilsson (2005) shows that Second, the atrocities committed by ex-combatants may create severe tensions with civilians who have suffered at their hands and hence affecting their social reintegration.

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Being assigned a new ‘family’ in LRA

Majority of the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) that we interviewed had stayed for a long time with the LRA rebels and they exhibited some form of loyalty as evidenced by interviews held with them. Methods of indoctrination included assignment of a new ‘family’ where they were promised material gains, such as rewards when the LRA takes over the Ugandan government. There was also the use of misinformation for them to believe that they are indeed in the right place. Some of the FAYMs expressed how they lived in Juba exhibiting some form of loyalty to the family of rebel leaders they were attached to. Here are some remarks from Lajapin (not real name), a 35 year old FAYM who was abducted at the age of 12 and spent 8 year in captivity (1995-2003):

When we reached Sudan they kept on selecting among us to assign us families, and a man called Odyambo and Diamo started training us ...but for me I stayed at Okello director’s place in Juba before he was killed together with Lagony. Before he was killed [Director Okello] he told us we should continue with the movement [LRA] since it is the movement that brought us here and it is the right movement to deliver Uganda and that there will reach a time that we shall go back home victoriously.... He told us that we shall have good life and even we would get high ranks in the army. He told us if we hurry to go home we would be killed by the UPDF who are ready for revenge. The way Okello used to treat us was different from the way Diamo used to treat us after Okello’s death. He used not to take us to raid and loot things from neighboring areas like how Diamo did. Okello was a good man...he was like a father to us (Lajapin, the FAYM, 2018).

From the excerpt above there is an indication that some of the formerly abducted young mothers (FAYMs) were attached to combatants who had stayed for a significant amount of time in the bush and were loyal to LRA, some of whom had become leaders. With the words FAYMs used to be told such as the ones above, they gradually started to trust the rebels, seeing them as guardians with feelings of being protected and being loyal to them. It can be seen in the interview excerpt above that part of indoctrination that LRA used was the material rewards the abductees were promised upon LRA triumph. In examining the words of the FAYM (Lajapin) above, she is showing an expression of how she trusted the commandant who looked after them ‘well’ and therefore the FAYM is inclined to believe the promised gains.

The relationship built during captivity had far reaching effects since such trust could not be extended to the communities. The indoctrination was well orchestrated to reconfigure the psychology and identities of the FAYM such as Lajapin to conform to LRA identity and values. This had a lasting impact upon the FAYMs return. Somasundaram (2002) points out that this causes almost irreversible damage in their evolving personality and attitude. Therefore basing on the above manipulations which come in form of indoctrination and moral reconstruction of the FAYMs it can be argued that in their return to their communities it becomes hard to have faith in community members especially in the face of discrimination and isolation. In fact some FAYMs longed to return to the bush because of the perceived ‘good’ treatment they experienced while in captivity. Interviews with FAYMs (especially those who were married to top commanders who resided in the Sudan base), in speaking

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about challenges they are facing in their areas of return they pointed out that life in captivity was much fairer:

Yes in the bush we used to get free food, stolen money, clothes, shoes ...
Unlike the life today (Japaro (not real name), the FAYM, 2018)

The above narration from the FAYM is corroborated by an interview excerpt from one of the Community Development officers (CDO) [Community Development Officer 1], when I asked him about interventions that captured the needs of the FAYMs. He highlighted a number of issues pertaining mentality of the FAYMs:

These people don't see home as a good place anyway because there they were used to free things while in the bush They were used to loot things and so on... but now is difficulty because one has to work very hard to get money to buy food (Community Development Officer 1, Kitgum, 2018)

The life the FAYMs experienced had other impact and consequence for social reintegration. An interview with one of the social workers revealed how the life of looting supplies in captivity affected the FAYMs on return. One of the social workers [Social Worker 1] pointed out thus;

From my observation in my FAYMs' family visits is that they FAYMs still require to be helped in terms of their behaviors. They stay well with the community but at some point 'that thing' comes in their minds and suddenly they change! When they ask for something and you tell them to wait, they start to cry and lament that they are not supported. You see in captivity they were free to do what they want- beating, quarrelling, and the like. In the community it is not possible for them to get all what they want, they can't afford. So these FAYMs when they ask for something they want it immediately. So sometimes we counsel the family members how to talk to them. In most cases we advise them not to respond to FAYMs immediately. They have to calm down the danger. Otherwise you cannot put out fire with fire [Social Worker 1, 2018]

From the interview excerpts above it can be argued that the orientation that the FAYMs went through in being exposed to acts of looting supplies contributed to some of the FAYMs being lazy and wanting to rely on assistance. An ethnographic research that was conducted in Gulu by Macdonald & Kerali (2020) among the community members revealed that there are some of the returnees who have remained idle and they do not cultivate and whose lifestyle is perceived as disorderly and parasitic. They attributed the idle behavior and linked that concern with the returnees' life in captivity- that they would loot people's food and belongings during attacks and ambushes

Exposure to Violence and being Forced to Kill and Witnessing Killings

Interviews with the FAYMs indicated that, soon after their abduction, the FAYMs along other abductees were forced to go through a series of actions of violence as part of initiation to LRA. To elucidate this, one of the FAYMs, Angene (not real name), a 22 year old who was abducted at the age of 6 and spent 8 years in captivity (2002-2010), pointed out

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that the rebels said she was too fearful and so they ordered her to kill her dad whom she was abducted with,

...they abducted me when I was with my father in the village called Orii... and they made us to move to the bush together with my father until a point that the rebels told me I am so fearful. So they ordered me to kill my father... if not I would be killed! I had nothing to do but to cut my father to death using a panga... At the rebel settlement camp, I was told to hack a man to death... and yaaah.... I did that!.. They used to order mostly the young recruits to kill...at the beginning I was disturbed in my mind and kept feeling bad. Later on I got used and I could do it normally... and life in the bush became normal after I had gotten use to the rebels; and I was staying in the rebels' camp which was just like home....seeing killings and killing became normal for me (Angene, the FAYM, 2018)

From the interview extract above, there was socialization of new recruits such as Angene, to kill their own family member. Being forced to kill or witnessing killings are traumatic afflictions that are often bases for psychological distress to the FAYMs that in turn complicate their social reintegration. Angene is currently troubled by a constant reminder by her relatives that she killed her father. As a result of that she does not feel free with the community at all. These community reminders have also influenced her husband's attitude towards her who keeps insulting her especially when he is drunk. Similarly, in a study that was conducted by Akello (2019) about Reintegration of Amnestied LRA Ex-Combatants and survivors' resistance acts in Acholiland, she pointed out how LRA ex-combatants' past have colored their everyday life in Acholiland, causing them to experience social stigma, judgment and discrimination from survivors (the community). Living at the social margins, and being constantly reminded of experiences they preferred to forget, makes it difficult for them to live a normal life and impacted on their relationships and behaviors and subsequently their social reintegration.

There is a clear indication that committing such horrendous acts was done to cause a psychological break and result in them attaching to a new entity-the rebel family (Bloom, 2018). This has an impact when the FAYMs return to their communities because of difficulties in adjustments in re-establishing their social ties with the community. Evidence of her failure to adjust are revealed when we asked her how she is fairing in relating with the community members since she returned,

In my area people normally stay with me but at times they scorn me referring to captivity things, and although the intensity of scorn has reduced...it is not like the way it was when I just came... but when someone ridicules me I feel very bad... and actually feel like beating that person! And I have beaten people so many times, yes (*with emphasis*), I have ever done it! People fear me. When they start a quarrel I cannot keep silent because it was to my wish to go to the bush (Angene, the FAYM, 2018)

Based on the above words, we can argue that as Angene was forced to commit a number of atrocities she became brainwashed thoroughly until her ethics and moral values became so distorted that she believed that doing evil is a normal thing. This is manifested in

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her statement- ‘seeing killings and killing became normal for me’. It should be noted that the atrocities the FAYMs were forced to commit led to transgression of Acholi sociality and fragmentation of familial relations which later led to the difficulties in the communities’ socially accepting them and other returnees and in turn complicating their social reintegration.

As part of indoctrination and orientation in rebel activity, findings from the field further reveal that the FAYMs along other young abductees received harsh treatment and experienced gruesome initiation and horrific orientation ceremonies involving beating and humiliation. For instance, it was narrated that FAYMs along other abducted children, mostly boys were given 100 strokes and two strokes of ‘panga’ (machete) on the backs as part of orientation in bush life. One of the FAYMs, Annekiste (not real name), witnessed a friend being bitten brutally because she had argued with the rebels about a certain order on the advent of abduction. She recounts:

As we moved we could find houses open...without people and when we reached a big mango tree we saw soldiers rushing after us...we actually thought they were government soldiers... they were rebels! They told us ‘don’t run! We will shoot you if you run!’ As we moved we found troops ahead...other people were also captured, others being killed. One of the boys I know was bitten to death as he tried to argue with the rebels (Annekiste, FAYM, 2018)

From the interview extract above, the FAYMs and other abductees were meant to be loyal to the rebels and they were not supposed to argue or question anything. The beatings and killings were made to instill fear in the abductees so that they do not commit any acts contrary to rebel orders. Those beatings were performed so as to make them subservient. It has been pointed out that by forcing new FAYM abductees to kill their families or community members, the LRA reinforced the fear that escapees will be alienated by society if they returned home (Acirokop, 2010). In other words, the tactic was intended to make it difficult for the FAYMs to escape and return home due to fear of reprisals from community members

Being forced to kill ones’ own child or ones’ own husband or a parent has a serious psychological impact. This has resulted into stigma when FAYMs returned to their communities. Lamure (not real name) was already married at the age of 18 when they abducted her alongside the new born and her partner. She was forced to kill her new born and later witnessed her husband being killed by the rebels. As a result of such experiences, Lamure finds it difficult to associate well with people. She said:

...sometimes the community members hurl insults at me and call me a murderer, especially the relatives of my late husband. My daughter is also called names in the school she studies from...(Lamure, FAYM, 2018).

The FAYMs’ forced participation in committing atrocities as seen above, were aimed at tying them to the LRA by making them fear the consequences of escaping if they were planning to do so. As it can be observed from Angene’s excerpt, being forced to commit an act of extreme violence, in this case being forced to kill her own parent, was a crucial mechanism in the initiation process. The initiation process serves to undermine earlier morals

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that the FAYMs had learnt from their communities. According to Kelly et al., (2016) initiation serves to make new recruits feel isolated from their families and bound to a new set of values. This made them to feel that LRA is their new family and a new home. Furthermore the perpetration of atrocities played a crucial role in turning some of the FAYMs (by then children) into combatants.

From this study majority of the FAYMs who were interviewed indicated that they were forced to kill and participated in abductions. Voices from the FAYMs show their horrific memories of how they were forced to do horrendous acts. For instance, Alagi, 23, who was abducted at the age of 14 and spent 2 years in captivity, had this to say,

While in the bush I was still young so they tied a person and ordered me to hack the person to death!! I did that more than once! I used a big stick, let me say a branch of a tree... But when you refuse to beat they kill you! And when you are on the way, they ask you 'are you tired?' You have to respond that you are not tired because when you say you are tired they just kill you" (Alagi,,FAYM Mucwini sub county, June, 2018).

In a related interview with the above-named FAYM indicated how she was negatively affected by the events in captivity. On her return, some community members keep telling her that she killed their relatives and that these words which the community keep telling her, keep reminding her of the past and she gets disturbed

The community members are not looking at us 'with good eyes' (direct translation from Acholi) because others could say, you killed my relative! So we were not feeling well... they say a lot of words that break my heart. At times, they just remind you of what you went through and left behind. It has not been easy and there is no good life that I expected to get from home....they kept on telling me the bad things that Kony did. Those are the words they throw at us to remind us of the past...like 'you who have returned from the bush! (Auma, FAYM, 2018)

Some of the FAYMs like Arane (not real name) pointed out that neighbors do not attack her directly but indirectly provoke her through letting their animals eat her crops from her garden

...the problem that I am facing from them is that during the time that I have planted my crops they have animals and they leave their cows free to eat wherever so their cows normally eat my crops even now I have chased six cows from my millet garden... the way I see they cannot attack me directly because the leaders have put a law that stops the community from abusing us, and so they use animals to destroy my things. That is the method I have seen that they have derived to use since they cannot attack abuse me directly. I see they want to bring back in me those bush memories just to upset me...(Arane, FAYM, 2018)

From the interview excerpt above, it is clear that despite the by-laws prohibiting the mistreatment of the formerly abducted and compelling the community to forgive and forget

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about the past, the neighbors are trying to find a way of showing anger and resentment to the FAYMs indirectly.

The study has noted that children can be programmed to do what is asked, such as killing someone, and they will do it with less fear and hesitancy. This is because according to Honwana (2006) and Tiefenbrun (2007) the moral status and agency of children at that age is still to be developed. This was true about the FAYMs in Kitgum. Previous studies on abductions in Northern Uganda and elsewhere present the forcible commission of violence especially killing as a key feature of initiation into LRA, one that serves several purposes including terrorizing the FAYMs and other abductees to break down their psychological defenses, raising the danger of punishment by their community if he were to return or escape (Singer, 2006; Honwana ,2006). These acts of killing and torturing members of their community or even their family, made the FAYMs and other abductees feel trapped in the military logic and finding it difficult to socially reintegrate in their communities (Derluyn et al., 2015).

Experiences such as witnessing people being killed, or participating in killing leave psychological scars in the minds of the FAYMs in a way that even after their return to their communities they still suffer psychologically. An interview with one of the cultural leaders (Rwot) showed how events in the captivity have left a psychological scars that will last for quite some time in the lives on the FAYMs:

...there is a lot that these people [FAYMs] have gone through, there are some things that still disturb them, some spirits still disturbs them. For instance I was interacting with one, who said that when they were in the bush, they cut the thigh of a human being that was smoked dry so she was told that it was to chase away fear from her and she was commanded to be carrying it like her gun and move with it. Aaaah... another girl also told me that she was told to carry two cut heads of human beings in the bag and when she sleeps, they wanted her to put one head facing her eyes and when she turns the other side, the other head should also face her eyes so as you can see...such trauma does not disappear easily from such a person...(Rwot 1, Kitgum Municipality, 2018).

The excerpt from the cultural leader above show the FAYMs are psychologically disturbed as a result of witnessing and committing horrendous acts. It is pointed out by Lueger-Schuster et. al (2012) that witnessing a violent crime during war time can result in PTSD symptoms which can manifest themselves in form of nightmares, hallucinations, among others

Trained in combat roles: Using guns to kill and Loot supplies

The aim of this section is twofold, first to demystifying the perspective that child soldiers are always a male gender and that girls in captivity perform only non-combat roles/supportive roles and the second is to show the combat training experiences and its related activities and their impact on FAYMs' return. According to Haer & Bohmelt (2018), most existing work assumes that child soldiers are under-aged males and girl soldiers have largely been neglected so far, although they frequently have significant roles in rebel groups. FAYMs are not reintegrated in the national army on returning from captivity because it is assumed it was only males that participated in combat roles. A number of male rebel

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returnees have been integrated in Ugandan Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) but there are no few female former combatants.

Findings from narratives among the FAYMs show that after being abducted, some were selected to participate in training for combat roles. They were trained in handling guns and were taken for target shooting exercises and later they were sent to attack civilians in the villages. Lakii (not real name) revealed how she was trained in handling a gun and later participated in raiding villages

Yes they showed us how to dismantle guns and fight. At some point we were instructed to go and raid village steal chicken, goats, sorghum, cassava among many others and killing people using guns which we kept on doing in the various places where we went in Soroti (Lakii, FAYM, 2018)

Participation of the FAYMs in raiding villages and killing people using guns has implication on the return to their communities. When Lakii was asked about the peoples' attitude towards her in connection with atrocities she committed in Acholi community. She had this to say:

They have never been happy with me, as well as my child and that us why I no longer stay in the village...and that is why none of my people has ever given me any help and many have been abusing me, except my mother (Lakii, FAYM, 2018)

The hatred of the relatives towards the FAYMs in connection with the atrocities they committed is a common place. Similarly, a survey study that was conducted in select regions affected by the conflict in Colombia and the respondents were asked whether they were willing to accept former members of armed group as neighbors or coworkers, for instance- they obtained mostly negative responses. The study further reveals that ex-combatants had expressed fears about the possibility of revenge attacks from the communities of return (Prieto, 2012). Similarly, this is a clear indication of how FAYMs' forced participation in atrocities have created scars in the hearts of community especially those whose relatives were killed- and this complicates the acceptance of the FAYMs due to deep seated hatred in people's hearts. Japaro, the 34 years old FAYM who was abducted at the age of 13 and spent 3 years in captivity narrated a wide range of hardship in captivity as she was trained as a fighter, and sent to different missions and commit atrocities and also showed how that has affected her as she returned in her community:

Yes I was trained to be a soldier... During the training ...we were given guns to dismantle and assemble....we were taken for target shooting. I was told by Kony himself that I will be a brilliant soldier! When I came back the people around would call me all sorts of names and I felt isolated, and up to now things are not all that fine because people are still not happy with me. You see from my village majority of the people were abducted, there were few people who survived. I keep feeling bad because I was among those who participated in the killings and abductions at a certain camp. People know about it... I was still very young by then but people cannot understand that (Japaro, FAYM, 2018).

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In trying to express how her participation in killings have affected her, the FAYM in the excerpt above narrated her ordeal about captivity life in the hands of LRA captors and said that even though she is back in the community and her life seems to be normalizing, she still hallucinates and dreams about what happened in the bush especially the people she killed and because of that she sometimes finds herself screaming. She narrated that she is haunted by the spirit of the dead and that is why she feels her head is not fine. Here is what she had to say:

...It is hard for me. You see when I was on my way from escaping from the bush we killed an old man and his spirit is haunting me...I am still suffering nightmares, bad dreams and I sometimes see things that other people do not see. I was taken through ritual cleansing but the spirit of the old man refused to leave me. I killed on my own...I was not forced. So when my father took me to the witchdoctor. He said all that I do is not successful because of that and the nightmares have stayed on because of the same. He said to my father that ‘your daughter went through the dark world and she needed help...the spirit said your daughter was meant to help the old man instead of participating in the killing him’ and I remember that this old man pleaded to me for help from me not to be killed (*sobbing...*).... (Japaro, FAYM, 2018)

In the above case, contrary to the popular discourse that emphasizes the formerly abducted young mothers as innocent victims (McKay et al, 2006), the extract above unveils the fact that there were atrocities that the FAYMs committed on their own account without being commanded by the rebel commanders. In Acholi cosmology in instances where the formerly abducted had decided to commit horrendous acts on their own, it is believed that they would severely be disturbed by ‘cen’ (spirits of the dead) as in the example of Japaro above.

The FAYMs I interviewed expressed feelings of wanting to be alone and not wanting to associate with people. This psychological distress is multifaceted by sexual violence and the shame that results from it when they get back to their families and communities. This is corroborated by interview with one of the aunties of the FAYMs, Pau’s auntie, as she remarked:

Actually when she arrived home it’s me who was the first to welcome her at home but unfortunately her mind was not settled due to what happened to her in the bush. Though sometimes she would be okay like loving people but other times she would isolate herself from people. However as time went on we began withdrawing attention on her as though she is not at home because we wanted her to be with family members (Community member-Pau’s auntie) (Pau, FAYM, 2018).

In a related interview with one of the social workers, findings show that there is still manifestation of fear among the FAYMs in regard to how they associate with their communities. He made the following remarks:

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Some are always terrified of the past because some isolate themselves for fear of people while others it is the community to isolate them for example if the FAYM is always rude or cruel the community isolates her. We handle such cases by encouraging them not to be afraid but to participate in physical activities like football, netball, dramas and the like (Social Worker 2, 2018).

With regard to the interview above, other studies have also shown that girls who were involved in committing atrocities displayed signs of emotional stress, like sadness, fear, irritability, and numerous phobias. According the study about former abductees that were conducted by Akello (2009) many encounter nightmares, imaginary dead persons attacking them or as dead people seeking revenge and compensation because they suffered a wrongful death or burial—and sleeplessness, which is related to the so-called ‘cen’ spirit (Akello, 2009).

War Time Sexual Violence: FAYMs Stigma on Return to their Communities

In the context of this study sexual violence is conceptualized as, inter alia, being raped, sexually enslaved, forcefully allocated as a “wife” to a man, and/ or to endure forced pregnancy (Amone-P’Olak et al, 2016). The aim of this section is to show the subjection of FAYMs to forced early marriages to the rebels have had an implication in their social reintegration on their return to their communities especially being stigmatized. In the interviews there was no direct question about forced marriage but as the FAYMs narrated about their experiences in the bush. They re-counted how they were forced into marriages at a young age between 11 and 14. It was found out from a number of interviews that the FAYMs (girls by then) were given to forced marriage following their first menstruation. Japaro, 30, who was abducted at the age of 9 and spent 3 years in captivity was forcefully given to a lieutenant at the age of 13, as she narrates:

When I was abducted, the person who abducted me gave me orientation about the bush culture that night and I was given to him as a wife-he was a lieutenant. He threatened me that if I refused to have sex with him he would shoot me dead! So I had to accept. But later on he passed on. He was shot dead by government soldiers (Japaro, FAYMs, 2018).

In a related interview, one of FAYMs-Sandire (not real name) who was abducted in 1994 at the age of 11 in the bus from Kitgum to Gulu, she was taken to Sudan along other abductees. She narrates her ordeal:

...when we reached Sudan base, they gave me a man who looks like the age of my dad. I refused! The man wanted to shoot me for real! So I had to accept. It was the time when I had just experienced my first menstrual periods and knew nothing really. When I remember what happened to me I feel so bad! I ask myself why did this had to happen to me? The man had many women. I was the youngest...(Sandire, FAYM, 2018).

Findings in this study show that 75% of the 23 FAYMs were abducted at the age between 6-15 and were given as wives immediately after their first menstruation. This is against the norms in Acholi culture because a girl is supposed to officially be given for marriage at the age of 18 with relatives of both the girl and the boy consenting. Annekiste,32, who was

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abducted at 11 years of age and stayed in captivity from 1997-2004 explained her ordeal about her forced marriage in captivity:

...they took us to South Sudan camp. I started my first menstruation at the camp...and immediately I was given out as a wife to one of the commanders, a captain whose age was equal to that of my father... I refused to have sex but the commander threatened to kill me! Later I did not even know that I was pregnant. I thought I was only fat. Then after they realized that I was pregnant they started to take care of me...those memories will never be erased from my mind and I feel so bad (Annekiste, FAYM, 2018).

The FAYMs, having spent a number of years in captivity, having been subjected to sexual violence through forced marriage, they return from rebel captivity to an unfamiliar environment devoid of the earlier protective and supportive environment that would have nurtured them into adulthood (Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010). They returned to their war torn communities with cultural distortion and with no or little support. According to Ochen et al. (2012), reintegration involves supporting former child abductees (in this case FAYMs) to strive to live as normal a life as possible, despite their experiences. Unfortunately, given the circumstances they underwent, they face a hostile community. Forced marriage of the FAYMs to the rebel commanders has far reaching implications especially in as far as community perception about them is concerned. They are perceived as pariahs, impure and unclean. This furthers their psychological distress and has serious implication on their social reintegration.

Immediately after being abducted Akejos (not real name), who was abducted at school in Primary 4 from a boarding school in 1997 at 14 years of age was given to a rebel commander as a wife and they got two children. She remarked:

...we were taken up to Sudan and we stayed there for one year. I was forced to have a husband at a young age and I gave birth to two children from there. During UPDF attacks I would fight with the baby on my back. I was also taught how to assemble and operate a gun and loot people's property. The father of the children was shot dead while still in the bush (Akejos, FAYM, 2018).

To corroborate with the above, an interview with one of the community development officers (CDO) also showed how some of the girls risked to lose their lives in captivity as a result of refusal to have sex with the rebel commanders, he remarked:

We give the FAYMs opportunities to speak and tell their story about how they got those children. Some narrate their ordeal on how they were given to marriage to old men among the rebels and how they were threatened to be killed if they refused to sleep with them. Since the old man has a gun, the girl would give in so as to rescue her life. In fact very many girls who have resisted have died that way! So coming back with children was not deliberate (Community Development Officer 2], Kitgum, 2018).

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Apart from forced marriage there were also experiences of rape that have had profound impact on the psychological state in the minds of the FAYMs as they return to their communities. They manifest themselves in terms of flashbacks and trauma. This is evidenced by the remarks from one of the community development officers:

...You find that most of those mothers came back when they are traumatized. There are cases when three members were abducted in the family, a girl and her brothers...the rebels had sex with the girl when the brothers are watching. It was the brothers that were commanded to hold the girl for the rebels. It so happened that after the rape the girl was told to kill his real brother. So when such FAYM came back she was always disturbed in her mind. Very many FAYMs have gone through similar experience. So majority of them came back when they are totally traumatized! (Community Development Officer 2], Kitgum, 2018).

Research has shown that each of the roles that the FAYMs carried out in captivity carries specific social stigmas that these FAYMs must engage during the rehabilitation and social reintegration process (Young, 2007). In relation to all excerpts above, as a result of sexual violations (both FAYMs' rape and forced marriages to the rebels) while in captivity, the FAYMs confront significant community stigma and poor relations with their families and neighbors. According Betancourt et al (2010) stigma exists when an individual is labeled, negatively stereotyped, categorized as separate, and experiences discrimination by someone who is in a position of relative power. In the context of this study the stigma the FAYMs are facing is social stigma, which comes as a result of their forced marriage to the rebels contrary to the approved moral and sexual behavior in Acholi tradition based upon traditional practices surrounding marriages. Sex and the bearing of children outside this cultural setting is met with resentment, rejection, and discrimination from the community that manifest themselves in form of stigmatization, name calling, insults and unpleasant statements to the FAYMs that tend to take their mind back to the bush memories and hinder their association with people.

Findings from the field have revealed that some community members believe FAYMs and their children have the mentality and spirits of the bush and are therefore can commit violence and killing anyone at any time upon returning to their communities. The FAYMs do face significant stigma as a result of negative community perceptions that they are bush wives possessed with 'cen spirit' having returned with babies that have illnesses from the bush. These experiences have created anxiety and a sign of depression in the FAYMs to the extent that some of them feel that life is no longer important and they prefer if they died instead. Having children born in captivity compounds the social relations between FAYMs and their communities as it can be seen from the excerpt from Aliaya (not real name), one of the FAYMs who had this to say concerning the community attitude towards her:

...when you try to express your opinion on something and try to argue or then someone disagrees. The community member will try to silence you by calling you such names as bush mother, or bush woman, rebel wife, and the like...and this makes you feel bad and you feel unwanted (Aliaya, FAYM, 2018).

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The above excerpt shows that FAYMs suffer from stigmatizing behavior from the community manifesting itself through name-calling, rejection and social exclusion. The judgment they receive from their communities once they return from captivity results into stigma that distances them from their own communities, which hampers social reintegration. A study conducted by Lawther (2017) in citing the work of Scheff and Retzinger (2001) explains how societal judgment leads to shame which is a threat to social bond. The negative consequences of stigma include feelings of humiliation, denunciation and unworthiness. I argue that, the feeling of unworthiness on the part of the FAYMs, in turn affects their social reintegration.

The findings of this study agree with those of previous studies. For instance, a study that was done in DRC by Child Soldier International (2019) which reveal the stigma many of the girls endure when they do return home. It stems from their ‘having known men’ – a phrase the girls in DRC used to refer to the sexual abuse and attacks they suffered.

FAYMs’ Return: Community Acceptance and Non-acceptance

Whereas the social reintegration inhibiting factors could be having their roots from the experiences that the FAYMs’ underwent while in captivity, as they returned to their communities issues of community acceptance, families and communities perception towards them and their children as well as actions of their leaders in their community (at micro level) do enhance or inhibit their social reintegration. The excerpt below shows how the FAYMs were rejected because of the children they returned with. It was evident that there are parents that received the FAYMs but the children of the FAYMs’ were resented as it was the case with Achosa (not real name) a FAYM who was abducted at the age of 9 and spent 9 years in captivity. She narrated:

...When I returned with my baby I went through World Vision in Gulu... my mum comes from that side, I found my parents dead here in Kitgum and so I wanted to go to my maternal relatives’ side and my grandmother accepted me in her home but told me to take away the baby from me. She did not want my child. So I had to be taken back to the World Vision in Gulu. Later on my uncle gave a condition that the World Vision should remove the child from me and take care of it. The organization accepted to do that but I refused to be separated from my child. World Vision had to rent for me a room in town. It was not easy to start life...(Achosa, FAYM, 2018).

From the excerpt above, I noted that community reception and acceptance was a complex issue and does not come easily. Due to lack of family support, Achosa had to reintegrate in a new community. What was common for most of the FAYMs, even though majority live in the communities they came from, they were resented by their own family or clan members. This is also revealed in another study done by Medeiros (2014) in Sudan which shows that while many former combatants receive a joyous welcome, over time their families and neighbors often struggle to accept them back into their lives and community.

There are also cases where some family members especially brothers resented sons of the FAYMs because of potential future competition over land. As one of the FAYMs-Annekiste remarked:

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My brother and his wife abuse and scorn my son. I decided that my son goes to the grandmother. And he keeps asking the grandmother ‘where is my father?’ I want to know our place... and the grandmother tells him ‘this is where you are supposed to stay’ and the kid keeps asking me as to why people keep scoffing at him. He wants to know the truth. The grand mum told him ‘you were born in Sudan and we do not know your father’s home and your grandmother’s place is your place (Annekiste, FAYM, 2018).

From the excerpts above, although the FAYMs are welcomed by their families as it was pointed out earlier on, there has been challenges in being truly accepted in their families. Being well received home is one thing and being accepted is another. From the excerpt above it was clear that resentment from the children of the FAYM came from the FAYMs family—particularly from the brothers of the FAYM. In Burundi, a study that was done by Kandanga (2007) showed that, even though girls returning from captivity were badly treated by all members of the family without exception, they considered the worst maltreatment to come from their brothers. The same study pointed out that, the intolerant behavior by the family is linked to questions of inheritance and that, when a girl gives birth to a boy, the maltreatment of the girl and her child is worse, because this child has the right to inherit from his maternal grandfather and therefore encroaches on the possessions which would otherwise come down to his mother’s brothers (Ibid).

Family Support

A healthy relationship between the FAYMs and their families is crucial for successful social reintegration. As Dudenhoefer (2018) argues, one of the crucial parts of reintegration is reconciliation [reconciliation means “the rebuilding of positive relationships following destructive conflict”, and to restore such positive relationships, local healing methods and rituals have to be supported] with families and communities. A study by Willems and van Leeuwen (2014) in their fieldwork in Burundi revealed that reconciliation is necessary in order to achieve full social reintegration and that without reconciliation, ex-combatants are not accepted completely in their communities of return. In our study it was revealed that some family members have been providing social support that the FAYMs’ need for instance one of the main support is child care. An interview with Japaro revealed that her mother helps her with child care support so that she finds time to look for money to care for her children. She said:

...apart from all those challenges I am facing, I am planning to send my children to my mum for holidays and I work so that by the time they are back they will find I have some money that I will use for their school requirements (Japaro, FAYM, 2018).

Another FAYM who expressed to have received strong support from her family was Arane who said the following:

aaa... when I came back I got my home [got married] but you know people within the community do not understand us very well, they kept talking bad things about me and so I separated with my man and I went back home.

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..lucky enough I have a supporting mum and sisters. They help me to look after my children. We are doing it together (Arane, FAYM, 2018).

Interview with Japaro's mother as part of the community member, who keeps the three kids from captivity had this to say:

...My biggest worry is what will happen to my three grandchildren in case I die today. I am worried about how my sons and other family members will treat these three grandchildren of mine particularly on clan land. I am trying to work hard so that I buy for them pieces of land so that they can have what they will call their own land. I would not let them to be harassed by their uncles...(Mother to Japaro, 2018).

The excerpts above show that the strength of the family structure can provide the tolerance and compassion needed to support the FAYMs even though they might exhibit difficult behavior. Other studies in different contexts have shown support that returning ex-combatants received from their family members. For instance a study that was conducted by Subedi (2014) in Nepal about economic reintegration and livelihoods showed that renewed family relationships provided an informal support mechanism in several ways, such as advice and moral support. The study further showed that, most family warmly received the ex-combatants back and the acceptance provided support in coping with hardships

Local leaders Support in Social Reintegration and Limitations

Community leader interventions have been considered crucial in the social reintegration of ex-combatants. Studies have shown that with the help of local and religious leaders, social and economic reintegration efforts aim to help those who have returned as well as the community, and the activities include family mediation for the ex-combatants and returnees rejected by parents and/or community; providing counselling and community sensitization (UNICEF, 2005). This is because community awareness, sensitization, peace and reconciliation education is very vital to social reintegration. Findings from the field indicate that local leaders in Kitgum have in some ways been involved in facilitating social reintegration of the FAYMs. One of the Community Development Officers [Community Development Officer 2] asserted that to bring about good relationship between the FAYMs and the community, leaders at lower levels have played some roles:

...we normally call for dialogue meetings where we sensitize the community on the badness of discriminating, insulting and ridiculing the FAYMs and other former abductees by the community and secondly, going to the bush was not their intention – we give the FAYMs a chance to tell their story and we emphasize on their innocence [Community Development Officer 2, 2018].

These dialogue meetings explained by the CDO above can be viewed as vital for social cohesion and eventual social reintegration. Local leaders play a very significant role in community cohesion (Islam, Wahab & Anggum, 2020) especially through dialogue. In an interview with another social worker, she made these remarks:

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...most of the formerly abducted girls have found life at home difficult to settle in. The community is failing to help such girls because they see them as social misfits in the community...however our organization in cooperation with some leaders in the communities we tried our best to sensitize the community to accept these people...[Social Worker 3, Kitgum, 2018].

The study findings above clearly show how important community sensitization is for the FAYMs to be socially reintegrated in their communities.

In addition to sensitization and dialogue meetings, local leadership in Kitgum has put in place by-laws aiming at stopping the community from discriminating against the FAYMs and other former abductees from captivity. One of the community development officers ...[Community Development Officer 3] said the following:

...in fact we have a bylaw that prohibits the community from backbiting, insulting, name-calling, discriminating against them among others...and somehow the community is trying to adhere to that because they fear to do the contrary, lest the law catches up with them and they get imprisoned for seven years.....[Community Development Officer 3, 2018].

From the words of the local leader in the excerpt above, we can conclude that in order to protect the FAYMs and other former abductees, leaders in the community, including local council leaders, cultural leaders as well as the police have been working to ensure that the community abide by the by-laws which have been put in place to protect the returnees (FAYMs inclusive). However in the study that Akello (2019) conducted in Acholiland, it was the local leaders efforts were viewed as reinforcing impunity among ex-combatants by cushioning them through protection laws. The community members (who are the survivors of the atrocities committed by ex-combatants) viewed 'that forgiveness' as a way of forcing the Acholi people to forgive the violent acts committed by the government and the LRA.

'Inclusiveness' of the FAYMs in Development Projects

Interviews with a number of local leaders at both the district and the sub county reveal that the FAYMs, other formerly abducted persons and other vulnerable groups are all meant to participate in development programs. The District does not have targeted interventions for particular categories of the population. The arrangement is that for any group in the community to benefit from any program it must include the name of at least one formerly abducted person. To quote the words of one of the CDOs:

...we normally tell the people that government does not have the program for only the formerly abducted but government does have programs for everybody. For example the NUSAF was for everybody and so if you want to make a group you must include those people (the FAYMs and other formerly abducted persons). Because when we are ranking, a higher rank goes to the group that has some returnees (former abductees). Higher marks are given to such groups. So in Mucwini Sub-county for example, we managed to raise 46 farmer groups...and among those 46 we managed to include the family whose relatives were killed during the massacre, and some returnees. So when our file was going to the Ministry, people were almost fighting for

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the returnees. So all the files almost had people we were focusing on to help (the returnees and FAYMs inclusive) so as a result we managed to reintegrate them into the community...

In a related interview among the local leaders as it was pointed out that although there is a requirement to include FAYMs names in project proposals, the community members used to remove the names of the FAYMs from the list and replace them with the non-abducted persons (camouflage). This is evidenced by the narrative of one of the local leaders:

We encourage them to form groups and the FAYMs must be members in that group but members hate them and sometimes they remove their names and replace them with the person who was not abducted. Most of the time the FAYMs are not happy. This is because if there are meetings they don't even inform them. Even when they are with the group members they are not free because most of the time they discuss about them. You know in Mucwini in Pajong there were massacres where 56 people were killed in July 2002. So when you are from the bush even if you talk like what they will not like you! ...and any support you want to give to those FAYMs they are not happy with it! It has been a bit difficulty (Community Development Officer 3, Kitgum, 2018)

As the above quotation illustrate, the removal of FAYMs' names in the list by the members of the community projects implies that the FAYMs are being rejected in their communities. Therefore despite the FAYMs being included in those projects lists, the above interview excerpts clearly show that some community members still resent them and they are not ready to work with them. It can hence be argued that social reintegration is a process that need to be conceived as the manner in which FAYMs become involved in their communities as reflected by their level of participation in community programs. Given the above scenario, there is need for the involvement of the local community and the FAYMs in crafting the reintegration programs together instead of just their names being added into the projects. Similarly, the research that was done by Kaplan and Nussio (2015) stressed on this approach and he asserts that community-level reintegration efforts can help balance the rights and interests of the community with the assistance provided to ex-combatants, fostering a feeling of inclusion and enhancing the legitimacy of DDR programs (CCDDR, 2009; Stockholm Initiative, 2006).

Conclusion

This this article aimed at investigating how the captivity and post captivity experiences impacted on the social reintegration of FAYMs. We have documented the abduction and captivity experiences of the FAYMs and how they were sexually abused. In addition we have documented the indoctrination and manipulation which they underwent to orient them to committing hilarious atrocities without fear. As part of captivity orientation and indoctrination, they were forced to kill their close relatives and committing acts of violence. The article has shown how FAYMs captivity experiences led to both physical and psychological impairment. The findings in this research have unveiled deep-rooted psychological and social barriers to social reintegration for the FAYMs due to the captivity experience. In addition we have explored the relations between FYMs and family and

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community and how the relationship is blurred by the experiences they had during captivity. We have observed that in most cases reintegration has largely failed. Through this research we see a number of factors that perpetuate failure for FAYMs social reintegration. The factors are all interlinked but are dependent not only on the experiences they had during captivity but also the perceptions community members had on the FAYMs upon return. We thus conclude that the captivity experiences of indoctrination and manipulation impacted on the character and behavior of FAYMs towards social reintegration. The reception and attitude of community members also impacted and compounded the social reintegration efforts thus limiting the social reintegration of FAYMs.

Recommendations

Any intervention to reintegrate the FAYMs should design *all-inclusive* programs that target both the FAYMs and community members to ease social reintegration. Sensitization of the community in accepting the FAYMs and their children can go hand in hand with psychologically rehabilitating the FAYMs and also including them in community development activities and projects, this study suggests that a lot might be required to be done by the leaders in the community to do more sensitization in the community and design programs that will absorb the FAYMs and guard against their names being deleted in project proposals. Inclusiveness could go beyond merely adding their names in the projects but rather the FAYMs and other abductees need to be active members, getting involved at the base of community activities before projects ideas are conceived.

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