

# War-affected children in northern Uganda: No easy path to normality

*International Social Work*  
56(1) 67–79

© The Author(s) 2012

Reprints and permission: [sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav](http://sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav)

DOI: 10.1177/0020872812459067

[isw.sagepub.com](http://isw.sagepub.com)



**Helmut Spitzer**

Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, Austria

**Janestic M. Twikirize**

Makerere University, Uganda

## Abstract

Armed conflict and war violate children's rights. In northern Uganda, thousands of children have been forcefully abducted and recruited by an armed opposition group. Despite relative peace and stability since 2006, children suffer from the destruction of the social, economic, and educational infrastructure, and lack of protection of their fundamental rights. This article provides an overview of international legal frameworks pertaining to children in war and discusses the role of social work in the overall rehabilitation process in northern Uganda. Children's rights are introduced as guiding principles and a key reference point for programming and practice.

## Keywords

armed conflict, child rights, child soldiers, social work, Uganda, war-affected children

War and armed conflict violate children's rights, not only on the African continent but also in too many other regions in the world.<sup>1</sup> In contemporary armed conflicts, over 90 percent of casualties are civilians (Machel, 2000; Summerfield, 1991; UNICEF, 2009), and children and youth increasingly

---

## Corresponding author:

Helmut Spitzer, Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, Hauptplatz 12, Feldkirchen 9560, Austria.

Email: [spitzer@cuas.at](mailto:spitzer@cuas.at)

bear the brunt of violence and atrocities. Children are deprived of a peaceful and nurturing environment; they lack protective and supportive family and community systems and adequate educational opportunities; and children are not neutral bystanders, but explicit targets of armed forces. The UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict identifies six grave conflict-related violations against children: killing or maiming; recruitment or use of child soldiers; attacks against schools and hospitals; rape and other grave sexual violence; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access (UNICEF, 2009). By 2007, there were 19 countries worldwide where children were recruited or used in hostilities, primarily by non-state armed groups, but also by some national armies. Eight of these countries were located in Africa<sup>2</sup> (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

The focus of this article is on a complex and long-lasting conflict in northern Uganda which caused thousands of deaths, hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people, and which led to gross human rights violations against the civilian population, including children. Particular attention will be paid to children who have been forced into the military ranks of an armed group called the Lord's Resistance Army. In academic writings, humanitarian assistance programs and political rhetoric, these children have been labeled as 'child soldiers'. This article adopts a critical approach to this terminology. First, the term might too narrowly focus on children who have carried arms. In the Cape Town Principles on children in armed conflict it was recommended to extend the term 'child soldier':

to any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups . . . It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. (UNICEF, 1997)

This definition essentially applies to the context in northern Uganda. Second, certain labels attached to children can lead to stigmatization and discrimination of the children concerned, and to a stereotyped view of children's needs, thus resulting in solutions based on such views, rather than on the complex, varied and dynamic experiences and needs of children (Jareg and Jareg, 1994). Third, programs targeting child soldiers face the danger of isolating these children from their communities who are themselves affected by the effects of prolonged armed conflict (Brett and McCallin, 1998; Spitzer, 1999). Fourth, the term 'child soldier' has become popularly associated with notions and corresponding concepts of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, thus indistinguishably applying certain Western-based psychological and/or medical treatment methods, neither considering the individual background of a child nor the cultural

context which significantly influences the way people perceive and cope with distress and traumatic events (Bracken and Petty, 1998; Brett and McCallin, 1998). When working with war-affected children, social workers and other stakeholders face a double challenge: While the special needs of children who have been actively involved in combat have to be recognized, one must also caution against the danger of stigmatization and inappropriate action. Thus, an integrative approach towards the social reintegration of under-age combatants is suggested here, calling for multifaceted, psychosocial, culture-specific, and child rights-based interventions that go hand in hand with broader social development strategies and policies targeting entire communities (Spitzer, 2008).

This article is inspired by research on the social reintegration of formerly abducted children, conducted in northern Uganda in 1999. By that time the Austrian author had analyzed the activities and approaches of two rehabilitation projects for war-affected children<sup>3</sup> (Spitzer, 1999, 2008). Subsequent field visits were made in 2008 and 2011. The article combines a Ugandan and a non-Ugandan socio-scientific perspective, both of which are rooted in expertise in professional social work and children's rights.

## **The conflict in northern Uganda**

For a long time, the conflict in northern Uganda has not been recognized by the international community, yet it can be described as one of the longest running, most complex and brutal conflicts on the African continent in recent history. It started in 1986, and it is deeply rooted in the history of the country. The 'anguish of northern Uganda' (Gersony, 1997) and the plight of its children can only be understood in relation to its broader political and societal context. At the heart of the conflict lies an armed struggle between a guerrilla group called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government and its Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), but it is mainly the civilian population who suffered most and who are still suffering, although there has been relative peace and stability in the region since late 2006. On the one hand, the LRA has been terrorizing its own people (primarily from the ethnic group of the Acholi); on the other hand, the population felt totally neglected by the government and maintained a deeply-rooted mistrust towards its interferences. From the mid-1990s onwards, a policy was adopted of moving people into internal displacement (IDP) camps ('protected villages'). In the following years, 80 percent of the population were concentrated into what Allen and Vlassenroot (2010: 15) called 'rural prisons', under appalling conditions. By 2009, 25 percent of the population were still living in more than 120 camps (GoU, 2009). Children living in IDP camps

in the north experience high infant mortality (123 deaths per 1000 live births) and under-five mortality (200 deaths per 1000 live births) (UBOS/Macro International Inc., 2007).

Dolan (2009) analyzed the situation in northern Uganda within a conceptual framework of 'social torture', thus blaming the Ugandan government for applying a policy of imposed structural violence and of systematically subordinating the Acholi population. Likewise, Mawson (2004: 135) states that the widely held Acholi view is that their society as a whole is the 'collective victim of monstrous injustice: longstanding injustice on the part of the government and now the additional injustice of LRA terror'. In interviews, people referred to an African proverb to describe their situation: 'When two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers.'

## **Abduction and forced recruitment of children**

As early as 1988, the LRA started to abduct and forcefully recruit children and young people in order to upgrade its military ranks. Although UNICEF established an Abducted Children Registration and Information System in 1997, there are only estimations on the exact numbers of abducted children. While official numbers state up to 25,000 (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008), some authors question such high estimates (Dolan, 2009). Mawson (2004) stated a figure of 18,000, while Blattmann and Annan (2010), based on their survey of war-affected youth, suggest a figure of at least 66,000 abducted children, the majority of them being adolescent males aged 12 to 16. This figure considers any time children spent with the LRA – regardless of length – as abduction, and also incorporates abductees who were taken as porters for looted goods to the Sudanese border, and released within a couple of days. Girls in the ranks of the LRA face the additional burden of being forced to serve as 'wives' for commanders – a euphemism for sexual slavery. In some regions, about 24 percent of abducted children were girls (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

Testimonies of formerly abducted children prove the brutality of human rights violations committed by the LRA as part of their indoctrination and control system – trapping children and youth into a fatal combination of enduring, witnessing and applying violence. Their dual roles of being both victims and perpetrators pose a particular challenge to reintegration efforts since communities are sometimes reluctant to receive children back who were forced to commit atrocities against their own peers, family, and community. As has been personally recorded by the first author through group counseling sessions, some children were forced to commit extreme forms of violence and punishment (Spitzer, 1999). According to Blattman and Annan

(2010), 49 percent of long-term abductees were forced to kill a soldier or civilian.

Although hostilities and child abductions have stopped, an estimated number of 2000 children and youth are still with the LRA, mainly outside Uganda (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008). Some of them have become adults meanwhile – grown up and socialized within the military ranks of a rebel group. There is also a growing number of children who have been born in captivity and who, together with their abducted and abused mothers, deserve special attention when they finally return home.

Apart from the LRA, also the Ugandan army and militia groups supported by the government ('local defense units') recruited children into their ranks. A cooperation and action plan between the Ugandan government and United Nations task forces led to a successful stop of child recruitment from 2007 (United Nations, 2009).

Despite the improved situation in northern Uganda, child rights violations continue and received a regional dimension. The LRA has moved to the neighboring countries of Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, triggering the displacement of 226,000 persons and the abduction of hundreds of children (United Nations, 2009). Thus, this armed group causes serious geostrategic challenges in the Great Lakes region, threatening the civilian population and affecting human and children's rights on a cross-border level. Efforts towards the demobilization and social reintegration of children and youth from these different countries therefore require concerted international efforts of politicians, military, non-government organizations, and UN agencies.

## **Violation of children's rights on a large scale**

The government of Uganda has ratified various international and regional treaties and conventions including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (which is the only regional treaty in the world that addresses the issue of child soldiering and that establishes 18 as the minimum age for military recruitment). At national level, the 1995 Constitution makes provision for the protection of children against abuses and harmful practices. On the basis of the constitutional provisions, a number of laws, policies and programs have been put in place for the protection of children's rights. The Children's Act (Chapter 59 of the laws of Uganda) is the most elaborate law on the protection of children's rights. Yet it has to be stated that in practice children's rights are largely not adequately protected, which is particularly true for the northern zone. Child rights violations and

children's vulnerability tend to be highest in conflict-affected northern Uganda (Kalibala and Elson, 2010).

Child rights abuses have been perpetuated not only by the consequences of the armed conflict but are also linked to widespread poverty and a fundamental lack of basic services. Even children who were not abducted or conscripted into the rebel forces suffered immense trauma and destitution as a result of losing parents and relatives, and being born and living in IDP camps and on the streets. A new form of vulnerability has emerged where children are in transient communities – neither settled in IDP camps nor in the villages where they are supposed to settle. As a result of the armed conflict, many children have lost their parents and when they return from the IDP camps, they are quite often not able to reclaim their parent's land and other property, rendering them destitute (GoU, 2011).

The most commonly identified child protection issues in the region include lack of parental care, violence, abuse, exploitation, and children in contact with the law (GoU, 2009). An estimated 22 percent of children in the region are orphaned, which is the highest percentage in the country.

As a result of the breakdown of infrastructure and social services, overcrowding and poor sanitation in the camps as well as poor nutrition, child health has been greatly affected, leading to high levels of morbidity and mortality. The education system has also been severely disrupted. Many schools have been burned, and hundreds of teachers killed. UNICEF (2009) reported that 41 percent of all primary schools in the Acholi sub-region were displaced from their locations by 2007. Female children are especially disadvantaged as they start schooling late and are often the first ones to drop out due to poverty, pregnancy, early marriages, lack of scholastic materials, food and other basic necessities. In some cases, children have to choose between attending school and searching for food and other means of survival (CSOPNU, 2007). Children returning from the LRA face additional challenges since they lacked educational skills while being in captivity, and are sometimes confronted with behavioral problems at school or discriminated against because of their experiences 'in the bush'.

Child protection has generally been affected through the breakdown of family and community networks as a result of the insurgency. Some former LRA child combatants cannot cope with community life; they face adaptation problems, lack of community support, and sometimes complete rejection. In the past, there have also been repeated incidences of re-abduction after a former LRA child combatant had 'successfully' been re-integrated into his or her community. A growing number of abandoned children end up

on the streets of Gulu and other commercial centers in the region, or travel to the capital city of Kampala where they are prone to further abuse and exploitation.

Sexual violence, sexual abuse of children, and child prostitution are widespread. In a study where more than 1100 children were interviewed, 50.5 percent reported that they had been sexually abused. Perpetrators were LRA, government soldiers, teachers, businessmen, and peers (CSOPNU, 2007). Another major but publicly almost unnoticed violation of children's rights is child trafficking. The phenomenon came to the fore during the armed conflict. During this period and beyond, children have been trafficked both within and across Uganda's borders for reasons ranging from commercial sex, plantation farming, domestic labor, drug trafficking, and conscription into armed forces (Kasirye, 2007).

The impact of armed conflict in northern Uganda has had far reaching effects on the situation of children's rights. It is no wonder that Carol Bellamy, the former UNICEF Executive Director, called the region as 'pretty much the worst place on earth to be a child' (cited in CSOPNU, 2007: 2). A multi-pronged and multi-sectoral approach by the state, humanitarian agencies, and the communities is required to deal with the underlying causes of child rights abuses and to help children to realize their rights and aspirations.

As a next step, we shall now look at legal regulations, policy frameworks, and practice models that can inform such a process. Special attention will be paid to the role of social work. As has been rightly stated by Denov (2010), social work has been largely silent on issues pertaining to war-affected children and to international debates concerning war and political violence. However, with its multidimensional thinking, reflective practice, and critical appraisal of complex situations, the profession is highly suitable and qualified to serve as a key stakeholder in working with and advocating for war-affected children. Human rights, which have played a crucial role in the history of social work (Healy, 2008), in particular children's rights may serve as a key orientation for policy and practice (IFSW, 2002).

## **International legal frameworks and policies**

A number of international documents, policies, and legislations address the issue of children affected by armed conflict. For social workers and indeed for everyone who is concerned about this issue, it is wise to be familiar with them, both for rights-based programming and practice as well as with regard to political action in order to exert pressure on governments and international bodies (for an overview, see Goodwin-Gill, 2011; UNICEF, 2009; for

Uganda, see Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2007). Most prominently, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, ratified by Uganda in 1990) and its two Optional Protocols form the base for every serious discussion on war-affected children. In 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted a new Optional Protocol to the Convention (ratified by Uganda in 2002), addressing one of the shortcomings of this otherwise impressive and far-reaching legally binding instrument: to raise the minimum age for participation in hostilities from 15 to 18. Additionally, the International Labour Organization in its Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999, ratified by Uganda in 2001) sets 18 as the minimum age for forced or compulsory recruitment.

With particular regard to the conflict in northern Uganda, another milestone has to be mentioned: the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) was established to try persons charged with committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The enlistment or use of children under the age of 15 (not 18!) to take an active part in hostilities qualifies for prosecution by the ICC – which is the case in northern Uganda. In 2005, the ICC unsealed its first ever arrest warrants against five LRA commanders, accusing them of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, abduction, rape, mutilation, and sexual enslavement (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

A very influential and guiding document on the impact of armed conflict on children is the so-called Machel Report (Machel, 1996), with its subsequent reviews (Machel, 2000; UNICEF, 2009). The initial report substantially influenced the international debate on war-affected children in general and child soldiers in particular, leading to a number of policy obligations and commitments. In 2007, the Paris Commitments and Paris Principles were launched, laying out legal and operational principles as well as guidelines to protect children from recruitment and use in armed conflict (UNICEF, 2009).<sup>4</sup>

One might argue that paper does not blush, but the political power of such legal frameworks and policies cannot be overstated. What is missing is the translation of international standards into national action that can make a tangible difference on the ground. As long as this is not the case, children's rights – not only in Uganda – will continue to be violated.

## **Some approaches on the ground**

As has already been stated, the complex realities and experiences of children affected by war require comprehensive and integrated support efforts. Although particular groups of children, such as former child combatants,

require special attention because of their unique experiences, singling out particular categories of children has dangerous implications, too. In the past, NGOs in northern Uganda mainly based their activities on running reception centers for formerly abducted children. As has been stated by Mawson (2004), one of the most important functions of such centers can be found in the movement through them in an officially and socially sanctioned rite of passage from the LRA to wider society. But they are also prone to labeling and ghettoizing children (Spitzer, 2008), and may be – although attractive for funding purposes – culturally inappropriate (Brett and McCallin, 1998). According to Blattman and Annan (2009: 113), the chief problem with reintegration programs in northern Uganda may be the focus on psychosocial assistance to ‘traumatized’ former combatants. These authors identify the largest impact of abduction on education and livelihoods rather than on physical and psychological harm.

Thus, it can be argued, effective programs for war-affected children should focus on education and vocational training, employment opportunities, and the economic security of families and communities. This calls for combined approaches of humanitarian assistance and more sustainable development initiatives. But, as could be observed in the context of northern Uganda, the moment a conflict situation becomes reasonably stable, international NGOs disappear and shift to the next disaster area. According to a Gulu-based UNICEF officer, about 80 percent of international relief organizations had left by the end of 2010.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, some local NGOs working with war-affected children have gradually shifted their activities to a broader context of recovery and resettlement and a more inclusive engagement of families and communities (e.g. GUSCO, 2010).

For the social work profession, such comprehensive approaches fit into a conceptual framework of developmental social work, with a balanced mandate of social intervention and dynamic economic development efforts (Midgley, 1995), and with a social change function (Midgley, 2010) – which is of fundamental importance in times of reconstruction, transition, and peace-building. In such a sense, the role of social workers is not confined to counseling and other casework-related activities, but is meant to engage in a number of broader community-based and macro-level initiatives.

It is equally important to note that, whichever interventions are made, the fundamental principles of children’s rights should serve as a guiding framework and a key reference point for programming and practice, in order to not lose sight of the individual child’s best interests. For this reason, it is crucial to critically reflect on local, culturally relevant concepts of childhood and child rights. In the Acholi culture, it can be observed that children’s rights are interpreted in a complex interplay

with their needs and certain obligations they have to perform (Spitzer, 1999). The rationale for considering culturally relevant knowledge systems lies in the call for social work in African contexts to critically reflect on Western models which might be inappropriate to respond to local needs. Rather, social workers have to make sure that their concepts and methods fit into the social, economic, and practical environment in which they operate (Osei-Hwedie, 1993). Not only concepts of childhood, but also notions of distress, trauma, healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation are bound to culture. To give one example, in some cases where children were forced to kill, family and clan members believed that an evil, unforgiving spirit (*cen*) of a killed person might haunt not only the child but his collective environment. An effective social reintegration would thus only be possible through the spiritual exercise of a purification and welcoming ritual, necessitating a close collaboration between social workers, the child concerned, family members, community leaders, and a traditional healer (Akello et al., 2006; Spitzer, 1999). As long as such practices do not negatively impact on a child's well-being, they should be regarded as essential steps in the healing process of an individual child and of the community.

### **A final comment**

We used the term 'normality' in the subheading of this article which is rather risky since its connotation might be related to notions of undisputed norms of behavior, attitude, belief, and the like. We used it in order to illustrate that the social realities of children living in war-torn zones, especially those who are disrupted from their families and forced to spend weeks, months, and sometimes years of their childhood in armed groups, are far from being *normal* compared to conditions in a peaceful society. Rather it must be assumed that the circumstances under which children grow up in times of armed conflict are completely abnormal. What is normal about a situation when a young girl at a tender age of 14 goes to school with her best friend and finds herself abducted on the way, given to a military commander for sexual services?<sup>6</sup> At the age of 16 she gives birth to a baby born out of multiple rape, and when she is released and sent back to her family and community she is regarded as being *defiled* (a common term for sexual abuse in Uganda) and not qualified for getting married, thus herself and her little one become outcasts. Is that normal? If the girl becomes depressive or is not capable of coping with her life and starts to use drugs, she faces a serious danger of being perceived as *abnormal*. With regard to the popular trauma discourse on child soldiers and war-affected children, we stress that the

reactions of children should primarily be seen as *normal reactions to extremely abnormal and traumatizing circumstances* (Tollfree, 1996), rather than interpreting them in clinical terms.

Hundreds of thousands of children affected by war and armed conflict experience the violation of their fundamental human rights. And the international community is watching. Western governments not only tolerate the proliferation of small arms and landmines that seriously affect children's lives, they produce them and take profit. Is that normal?

## Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## Notes

1. In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and national Ugandan law, we use the term 'child' for every person under the age of 18.
2. Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. It must be assumed that in Libya, when the revolt started in 2011, under-age combatants were also involved in the armed struggle.
3. The two organizations were the local NGO GUSCO (Gulu Support the Children Organization) and a branch of the international Christian organization World Vision (World Vision Uganda Children of War Project). Data were collected through participant observation, interviews with social workers and other key informants, and ethnographic research on indigenous concepts of healing and reconciliation.
4. All mentioned documents can be found on the World Wide Web.
5. Interview, Gulu, April 2011.
6. Case study based on field research.

## References

- Akello, G., A. Richters and R. Reis (2006) 'Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda: Coming to Terms with Children's Agency and Accountability', *Intervention* 4(3): 229–43.
- Allen, T. and K. Vlassenroot (eds) (2010) *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Blattman, C. and J. Annan (2009) 'Child Combatants in Northern Uganda: Reintegration Myths and Realities', in R. Muggah (ed.) *Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Dealing with Fighters in the Aftermath of War*, pp. 103–25. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Blattmann, C. and J. Annan (2010) 'On the Nature and Causes of LRA Abduction: What the Abductees Say', in T. Allen and K. Vlassenroot (eds) *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*, pp. 132–55. London and New York: Zed Books.

- Bracken, P.J. and C. Petty (eds) (1998) *Rethinking the Trauma of War*. London and New York: Free Association Books.
- Brett, R. and M. McCallin (1998) *Children: The Invisible Soldiers*. Stockholm: Rädda Barnen.
- Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) (2007) *Worst Place to Be a Child: The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in Northern and North-eastern Uganda*. Kampala: CSOPNU.
- Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2008) *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*. London: Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.
- Denov, M. (2010) 'Coping with the Trauma of War: Former Child Soldiers in Post-conflict Sierra Leone', *International Social Work* 53(6): 791–806.
- Dolan, C. (2009) *Social Torture. The Case of Northern Uganda, 1986–2006*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.
- Gersony, R. (1997) *The Anguish of Northern Uganda. Results of a Field-based Assessment of the Civil Conflicts in Northern Uganda*. Kampala: USAID Mission.
- Goodwin-Gill, G.S (2011) 'The Challenge of the Child Soldier', in H. Strachan and S. Scheipers (eds) *The Changing Character of War*, pp. 410–28. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Government of Uganda (GoU) (2009) *Child Protection Recovery Strategy for Northern Uganda, 2009–2011*. Kampala: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
- Government of Uganda (GoU) (2011) *National Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children, 2011/12–2015/16*. Kampala: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
- Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO) (2010) 'Reintegration of Returnees, Ex-combatants and Other War-Affected Persons in the communities of Gulu and Amuru districts, Northern Uganda', research report.
- Healy, L.M. (2008) 'Exploring the History of Social Work as a Human Rights Profession', *International Social Work* 51(6): 735–48.
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2002) *Social Work and the Rights of the Child. A Professional Training Manual on the UN Convention*. Berne: IFSW.
- Jareg, E. and P. Jareg (1994) *Reaching Children through Dialogue*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Kalibala, S. and L. Elson (2010) *Protecting Hope: Situation Analysis of Vulnerable Children in Uganda*. New York: Population Council.
- Kasirye, R. (2007) *Rapid Assessment Report on Trafficking of Children into Worst Forms of Child Labour, Including Child Soldiers in Uganda*. Kampala: ILO.
- Machel, G. (1996) *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. Report of the expert of the Secretary General of the United Nations Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 48/157*. New York: UN.
- Machel, G. (2000) 'The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. A Critical Review of Progress Made and Obstacles Encountered in Increasing Protection for War-affected Children', Winnipeg.

- Mawson, A. (2004) 'Children, Impunity and Justice: Some Dilemmas from Northern Uganda', in J. Boyden and J. de Berry (eds) *Children and Youth on the Front Line: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement*, pp. 131–44. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.
- Midgley, J. (1995) *Social Development. The Developmental Perspective in Social Welfare*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA and Delhi: SAGE.
- Midgley, J. (2010) 'The Theory and Practice of Developmental Social Work', in J. Midgley and A. Conley (eds) *Social Work and Social Development: Theories and Skills for Developmental Social Work*, pp. 3–28. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Osei-Hwedie, K. (1993) 'The Challenge of Social Work in Africa: Starting the Indigenisation Process', *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 8(1): 19–30.
- Spitzer, H. (1999) 'Kindersoldaten' – *Verlorene Kindheit und Trauma. Möglichkeiten der Rehabilitation am Beispiel Norduganda*. Vienna: Suedwind.
- Spitzer, H. (2008) 'Rehabilitation und soziale Reintegration ehemaliger "Kindersoldaten": Beispiele aus Norduganda', in K. Ottomeyer and K. Peltzer (eds) *Überleben am Abgrund. Psychotrauma und Menschenrechte*, 2nd edn, pp. 275–303. Klagenfurt: Drava.
- Summerfield, D. (1991) 'The Psychosocial Effects of Conflict in the Third World', *Development and Practice Journal* 3(1): 159–73.
- Tollfree, D. (1996) *Restoring Playfulness. Different Approaches to Assisting Children who are Psychologically Affected by War*. Stockholm: Rädda Barnen.
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and Macro International Inc. (2007) *Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2006*. Kampala and Calverton: UBOS and Macro International Inc.
- Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2007) 'Time to Implement! National and International Legal Instruments Related to the Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Forces and Groups in Uganda', Kampala.
- UNICEF (1997) *Cape Town Annotated Principles and Best Practice on the Prevention of Recruitment of Children into Armed Forces and Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa*. Cape Town: UNICEF.
- UNICEF (2009) *Children and Conflict in a Changing World. Machel Study 10-Year Strategic Review*. New York: UNICEF/Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.
- United Nations (2009) 'Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Uganda', UN document S/2009/462, New York, 15 September.

### Author biographies

Helmut Spitzer is a Professor in the School of Social Work, Carinthian University of Applied Sciences, Austria.

Janestic M. Twikirize works in the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, Makerere University, Uganda.