



# The Drivers of Reporter Reintegration in Northern Uganda



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1818 H Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20433  
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Programme transitionnel de démobilisation et réintégration

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**January 2012**

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# List of Acronyms

AC	Amnesty Commission
ACSP	Amnesty Commission Special Project
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AG	Attorney General
CDD	Community Driven Development
CFP	Community Focal Point
CPU	Child Protection Unit (of UPDF)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DISCO	District Internal Security Officers
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DOB	Date of Birth
DRT	Demobilization and Resettlement Team (Amnesty Commission)
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GISCO	Gombolola Internal Security Officers
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoU	Government of Uganda
GUSCO	Gulu Support the Children Organization
ICRS	Information, Counseling and Referral System
IDA	International Development Association
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
ISM	Implementation Support Mission

JLOS	Justice, Law and Order Sector
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDRP	Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MIS	Management Information System
MTR	Mid-term Review
NCG	Nordic Consulting Group
n.d.	no date (in citations)
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NUDIPU	National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIM	Project Implementation Manual
PRDP	Peace, Recovery and Development Plan
PS	Principal Secretary
SSD	Spontaneous Self Demobilization
TA	Technical Assistance
TDRP	Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program
TPO	Transcultural Psychosocial Organization
TSN	Transitional Safety Net
UgDRP	Uganda Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project
UNRF	Uganda National Rescue Front
UPA	Ugandan People's Army
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defence Force
USD	United States Dollars
WHO	World Health Organization
WNBF	West Nile Bank Front

# Executive Summary

This report is part of a number of studies conducted for the World Bank and the Amnesty Commission to coincide with the end of the Uganda Demobilization and Reintegration Program (UgDRP). It benefits from field work for the Final Independent External Evaluation of the UgDRP, the Reporter Reintegration and Community Dynamics Study, and the Implementing Agents study, all of which were completed between August and December 2011. All reports are complementary and benefit from being read together.

## 1. Findings

Reintegration is a two way process and involves the reintegration of reporters<sup>1</sup> and communities together. A community is a group within which people have something in common with each other, which distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups. Community simultaneously implies difference from members of other groups and similarity to other people. What distinguishes communities is the boundary. The boundary marks the beginning and the end of community and is called into being through social interaction. Boundaries are enacted because communities interact with other groups or individuals from whom they want to be distinguished in some way. Communities have multiple boundaries enacted at different times. Boundaries take many forms and can be expressed as physical (for example, jungle or mountain), geopolitical (such as national boundaries), linguistic or religious, and importantly they can be visible or invisible. That a boundary may be invisible implies that it may be in the consciousness of individuals or in the shared perceptions held by groups of individuals. As such boundaries, the symbolic things that separate us from others, can be internal to communities and so can be enacted against people who “are on the same side” or

who are understood to be similar. As with most cultural constructs, boundaries are fluid and shift with cultural changes and with how particular groups and individuals perceive themselves and others.

Reporters and communities, but particularly reporters must navigate significant boundaries to reintegrate. Reporters navigate physical and symbolic terrain to re-enter their communities and are faced with complex economic and social barriers on their individual paths to reintegration. The uniqueness of each reintegration pathway means that this study, which draws on common experiences to derive learning to inform future DDR programming, highlights how reporters face unique challenges to reintegration. It also shows how social, economic, characteristics of armed group, demographic and life circumstances can coincide to present each reporter with a different set of barriers to reintegration. Reporters must employ particular skills and where possible use particular drivers to enable them to engage in the sometimes long process of reintegration.

In so far as boundaries can be the symbolic things that separate individuals or groups who appear to be “on the same side”, for some female reporters, boundaries informed by gender bias and cultural norms can be enforced in a particularly harsh manner. This presents the reporter with an apparently endless struggle to reintegrate, a journey that will be traumatic and destructive. Female reporters by virtue of being female and by virtue of how economic value is attributed to females in kinship networks can face far harsher barriers to reintegration and greater challenges gaining

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<sup>1</sup> Reporters in Uganda are both ex-combatants and their dependents who have renounced all involvement with the rebellion and registered with the pertinent government agencies. To receive amnesty, reporters must satisfy the conditions contained in the Amnesty Act of 2000.

access to economic and social drivers of reintegration than other groups of reporters.

Because their families and their communities enact boundaries and exclude them, the psychological and physical violence experienced by some female reporters who have children born while they were in captivity could become intergenerational social issues because their children are labeled “rebel children”, and are deprived of family and the chance to begin life on an equal footing with other children in the community.

While confirming some general dynamics of reintegration, this study draws attention to the heterogeneity of the reporter population and to how this heterogeneity greatly informs the degree to which reporters successfully reintegrate and the paths they take to do so. A constraint (but a practical choice) of programs of social, economic, and political reintegration is to address reporters as somewhat homogeneous groups. This is strategically adequate but it risks not paying sufficient attention to the diverse combinations of successes, barriers and pathways that each reporter experiences during reintegration. So for example, while in general the economic and social reintegration of reporters will benefit from the reporters receiving training, the fact is that the diversity of reporters, the mix of gender, age, former armed group, family history, geography, community receptiveness and market conditions means that not all reporters will benefit from standardized programs of vocational training. For example, reporters with highly functional kinship networks, which can facilitate access to informal credit, may benefit more from being able to finance a business venture of income generating activity. Female reporters, particularly those with children, will more frequently have their access to markets blocked by poor kinship networks. Frequently they are refused access to credit including the leasing of land thus constraining their economic reintegration. The reintegration of all reporters will be highly informed by life circumstances and by the degree to which their communities can accept them back not just as reporters but also as females and males, as disabled or poorly educated, and the degree to which cultural practices or traditions including those based on gender will permit individuals to regain the ground they lost while in captivity or in the rebel group.

## 2. Drivers of reintegration not directly linked to formal DDR processes

The study finds the following regarding drivers of reintegration that are not directly linked to the formal DDR processes:

**Kinship networks** are central drivers of social and economic reintegration by: (i) enabling reporters to re-settle; (ii) facilitating the interaction of reporters with the general community and often helping inform the community reaction to particular reporters; (iii) where available, providing immediate material support (akin to reinsertion assistance and short-term reintegration support), including access to family assets such as land, and (iv) providing for longer term economic support including informal credit.

Kinship networks can also be used negatively to restrict the reintegration of reporters; for example, via: (i) misappropriation of reinsertion payments; (ii) stigmatization and deliberate exclusion of reporters from the family; (iii) enacting violence against returning reporter family members; (iv) negatively impeding the social reintegration of the reporter in the community, and (v) denial of access to assets.

The centrality of kinship to enabling reintegration and the tendency for vulnerable groups, particularly female reporters with children born while in captivity, to experience hostility and exclusion by family, would suggest that DDR programming in Uganda or elsewhere should comprehensively target the family during community sensitization and preparation for reinsertion. DDR programming should also include a strong dialogue and reconciliation component that adequately targets the families for vulnerable reporters to openly resolve drivers of exclusion of vulnerable reporters where possible.

**Access to assets and credit** is a driver of economic and social reintegration. This includes the extent to which a reporter is given access to one or both of the following: (i) family assets such as land, informal credit or business/livelihood strategies; and (ii) their own assets which were in place prior to their time in the bush including land, savings, business and access to institutional support. Access to assets via kinship networks is a significant driver of economic and social reintegration. Access to land improves the immediate reintegration opportunity and provides report-

ers with land for subsistence agriculture if there is a means to tend it. If access is sufficient and the reporter is capable of tending the land appropriately, there is the potential to sell excess good harvests to generate income, a practice to which most reporters surveyed who have sufficient land and resources aspire. The study suggests that DDR programming should have a strong justice, law and order sector (JLOS) component, which contributes to ensuring that reporters have equal access to justice when seeking to resolve issues regarding unregulated land division. Also, this study suggests that reintegration programming should include high quality community-driven development (CDD) components including ones with a focus on community-based micro-finance.

**Diversification of livelihood strategies**, particularly outside agriculture, is a driver of successful economic reintegration. Reporters who have the capacity to diversify beyond agriculture appear to be better re-integrated. Those who have diversified into trading usually have been enabled to do so through access to informal micro-finance or credit in their family. The economic activities of those reporters who have been vocationally skilled since demobilization as part of programmatic reintegration are often curtailed by seriously depressed market conditions. Collaboration on income generating activities (IGAs) is not an indicator of success or successful reintegration. In particular much of the collaboration identified by reporters is a result of how individual reporters are grouped together to receive IGA training and vocational training by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However there are reporters who have managed to collaborate with non-reporters in a successful IGA, for example to cut costs.

**Education and training** is important in reintegration as there is a correlation between poor literacy and numeracy and problematic economic reintegration. The negative influence of poor literacy and numeracy is wide and in the case of numeracy can limit the ability to acquire a vocational skill or effectively and independently manage cash-flow. The disparity in literacy and numeracy between female and male reporters is also documented and the sample in this study reflects how female reporters are more likely to have literacy and numeracy issues. This would suggest that programmatically, reintegration assistance where possible should include education in basic literacy and

numeracy in order to make up for some lost education opportunities encountered by some reporters as a result of their time in captivity.

### 3. Important dynamics influencing reintegration

The study has found that there are two important influencers of reintegration: (i) gender; and (ii) market conditions.

**Gender** is a significant influencer of reintegration primarily because female reporters face far more reintegration challenges based on cultural and traditional gender dynamics and because their life circumstances are often radically altered during their time in captivity. On the basis of their gender some female reporters, particularly those with children, tended to endure particularly extreme stigmatization, psychological and physical violence including assault and threats of death. For females with children born while in captivity stigmatization and rejection can be particularly brutal.

Some key perceptions inform the barriers that challenge the reintegration of female reporters, particularly those with children including: (i) the perceived economic burden to the family of supporting female reporters and their children; (ii) a lack of acceptance of the value of full reintegration of reporters or understanding of the reasons to accept back family members who often spent a long time in captivity; (iii) the social burden of having a female household member that possibly may never marry, and (iv) the cultural obstacle of not accepting children of a non-patriarchal bloodline into the family. Some female reporters face additional challenges accessing family assets primarily as a result of traditional land ownership and not as a result of being a reporter; however being a reporter is a contributing factor. Those female reporters who are poorly reintegrating tend to experience barriers accessing land and accessing family credit, and those who have children from the time in captivity tend to have more chaotic relationship patterns and difficulty creating their own family. The result is likely to be that barriers to reintegration that are informed by negative traditional perceptions of gender will transform into the systematic exclusion of women and forced poverty for those women without the social capital to establish themselves independent of hostile kinship networks and restrictive traditional practices where they occur.

The programmatic implication is that DDR programming should be highly gender sensitive and dovetail with other development, post-conflict and stabilization interventions that positively target women and seek to reform harmful traditional perceptions of gender and the social manifestation of same in, for example, gender-based violence (GBV).

**Market conditions** are significant enablers or inhibitors of economic and concomitant social reintegration. In Uganda severe development challenges mean that those reporters who are re-skilled during reintegration or return with pre-existing or acquired skills such as carpentry often cannot use those skills because of the absence or lack of market demand. This restricts the ability of reporters to diversify their livelihood strategies and in many situations enforces dependency upon subsistence agriculture and creates risks to food and income security, ultimately contributing to long-term poverty.

The programmatic implication is that reintegration programs could be greatly complemented or enhanced by an increase in CDD interventions that draw on the learning in existing structures and programs such as the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) and which has a strong micro-credit or micro-finance component. Such interventions can empower local communities and assist in stimulating the development of local markets.

#### 4. Drivers of reintegration directly linked to formal DDR processes

The study finds that, other than medical treatment for physical or psychological illness and vocational training, there is very little interaction between the reporters interviewed and formal reintegration processes. Following are the conclusions that can be drawn regarding drivers of reintegration that are directly linked to the DDR process.

Experiences during **reception** drive the political reintegration of reporters. During reception many reporters have their first contact with the Ugandan state through their interception by the UPDF. For reporters in this study the initial contact with the UPDF is positive and contributes directly to their political reintegration by contributing to the emerging trust they have for democratic institutions of the state. In no small part the UPDF are enabled to act positively

toward reporters because of the Amnesty Act, which pardons all reporters within very wide parameters that identify those eligible for amnesty. Consequently the systemic impact of the Amnesty Act realized through the activities of the UPDF is a driver for the successful political reintegration of reporters.

**Time** is a factor influencing the reintegration of reporters: (i) the longer the time spent in captivity the longer the break in normal life trajectory and the more likely it is that reporters will acquire significant life changes that will negatively influence their reintegration; (ii) where barriers to reintegration are present, reporters who are more recently returned tend to experience the effects of those barriers more severely.

**Reinsertion** packages and payments to those who were newly returned tended to have dual outcomes: (i) meeting the small, immediate needs of the reporter and their dependents, and (ii) being part of establishing a longer-term income generating activity. As such reinsertion assistance contributes to the reintegration of some reporters.

**Vocational training impacts the livelihood strategies** of most reporters who received it but training and reintegration programs could be greatly complemented or enhanced by an increase in CDD interventions that draw on the learning in existing structures and programs such as NUSAF and which have strong micro-credit or micro-finance components. CDD is one possible solution to the collection of interdependent environmental inhibitors of reintegration, which trap reporters and non-reporters in income poverty. CDD can combat market stagnation and have important subsidiary effects such as strengthening social cohesion and the perceived value of local government. It would also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of vocational training provided to reporters, for example by GUSCO (Gulu Support the Children Organization), and prevent those skills being unused and the physical assets (such as sewing machines) given to skilled groups of becoming redundant.

Reporters in this study who have received some treatment for **chronic pain** have been better able to have an income generating activity and take steps towards reintegration. The implication for programming is that appropriate screening, rehabilitation and disability or illness-sensitive training will be a driver to successful reintegration by enabling reporters to manage

the barriers presented by their own physical and mental health. However there should also be a wider program aiming to de-stigmatize and de-mystify mental health and focus on developing long-term mental health supports in the community to assist reporters and non-reporters cope with the long-term effects of conflict. **Ongoing rehabilitation** of reporters, both physical and psycho-social, is crucial to enabling reporters to economically 'catch up' to other members of the community and compensate for time lost while in captivity. Reporters, particularly those dependent on subsistence agriculture, are more vulnerable to food and income insecurity because of undiagnosed and untreated physical injuries.

Family and community acceptance are important drivers of reintegration and as such DDR sensitization should effectively target the two with particular emphasis on acceptance of vulnerable groups.

**Vulnerable groups**, particularly female reporters, would greatly benefit from a more comprehensive approach to sensitization but also from conflict resolution in families with children born in captivity.

**Gender-based violence**, while not fully documented in this study, is a prevalent aspect of the marginalization of female reporters. It occurs in families and between spouses. This violence is physical and psychological and builds on the often great trauma experienced by girls during captivity. It is a significant inhibitor of reintegration. Consequently reintegration programming should be strongly gender sensitive and contain some work pertaining to the eradication of GBV.

Political reintegration could be better addressed, particularly with the LRA reporters in the study. This could be done through more comprehensive **citizenship, government and social awareness** training in addition to the current support around conflict resolution and social responsibility that is given to reporters prior to reinsertion. Such extended training is critical to ensure that political reintegration does not continue to lag behind social and economic reintegration.

Citizenship training should encompass issues such as human rights, democracy, nation building, gender and others, and the goal of such training should be preventative; that is, ensuring that disputes arise within the community or the region; the risk of reporters taking up arms or returning to insurgency is managed. This sort of programmatic support also assists reporters to engage with democratic and civil institutions.

## 5. Future studies

This study is based on a snapshot of reporter reintegration and was completed in a short period of time. This allows for a quick turnaround of data and analysis, which has been complemented by a complex methodology combining quantitative and qualitative data capture and analysis. However there are also limitations to the study and important areas of reintegration that are analyzed but which could be addressed through future studies, namely: (i) personal characteristics and traits that enable reporters to reintegrate; (ii) in-depth psycho-social dynamics of reintegration, and (iii) in-depth analysis of war-time experiences and how they affect reintegration.

Any future study would be enhanced if it were longitudinal and involving repeat visits and interviews over time. It is noted in this study (section 3) that frequently reporters had emotional or psychological difficulties continuing with the interviews for the quantitative and qualitative data collection. Simply put, the trauma of recalling details of their lives in captivity or immediately after escaping was sometimes too much for individuals to endure. In such instances interviews were adjourned or in one case abandoned. To delve into the more traumatic experiences of reporters either during war-time or in relation to the psycho-social legacy of conflict would require that all interviews are conducted with on-site psycho-social back-up. Ideally a local NGO could be partnered with for this purpose (for example the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, TPO) in order to have a mental health professional available to interviewees.