# **4.** Social and Political Reintegration

Sustainable social reintegration includes the reconstruction of the societal bonds that were deconstructed by conflict. It includes the harmonization of reporters and community and the re-establishment of shared beliefs, norms, social opportunity and social inclusion that are based on principles of democracy, peace and dialogue.

## 4.1 Social networks

At the heart of social reintegration are functioning social networks. In the study, the composition, sustainability and functionality of the social networks of reporters and communities was assessed in order to accurately gauge how well these basic pathways to social reintegration and social inclusion were working for each group.

At the core of most social networks is the family when functioning well. Reporter family networks are strong and reporters have full/high contact with family. This applies across all demographics. The frequency of contact also applies across all demographics with most having daily contact, which is the same as the community.

That said, the economic and social support networks of reporters are limited in size in comparison to those of community members. For example, fewer reporters belong to social networks than ordinary community members and reporters generally have a smaller number of good friends than community members. Having less friends and the fact that female reporters in particular have a limited social circle and stunted social networks is a limitation on personal security and a stressor of mental health. Risks of isolation will increase in some cases compounding the trauma already endured as a result of conflict.

## 4.2 Perceptions of community, trust and solidarity

Reporters and communities are very well socially integrated together and have broadly similar understandings of the dynamics of their communities. Reporters generally feel valued in their community. Female reporters, young reporters aged 18-30 and disabled reporters record the highest percentages who feel lowly valued. Most community members (and reporters) believe they personally have a positive impact on their communities (81.3% and 82.1% respectively). The study finds that 68.5% of community members believe they are highly valued, 29.8% medium valued and only 1.7% lowly valued compared to 59.0%, 35.6% and 5.4% of reporters respectively. Female and male community members have comparable responses. In comparison to female reporters, female community members feel more highly valued than medium valued: 70.2% of female reporters say they are highly valued and 26.3% that they are medium valued compared to 48.0% and 44.1% of female reporters respectively.

There is little difference between community and reporters regarding trust. In all areas there is close to parity: (i) the extent to which people in the community can be trusted; (ii) whom can be trusted in society across the categories of people, (iii) explanation of the reasons of changes in levels of trust. What this indicates is that there is broad agreement on levels of trust but reporters who historically are likely to have had more exposure to strangers and the military are

more trusting of all the main categories of individuals about which they were asked than the community.[10] Most reporters are confident enough to be open about their past. Reporters and community strongly share the same perception of the high levels of diversity in their communities and, while they both recognize that diversity and difference can contribute to conflict, the conflict identified does not appear to have anything to do with the wars of the past or with anyone being a reporter. The significant majority of reporters feel part of the community as does a similar percentage of community members.

## 4.3. Empowerment and social change

Of those who identify that they have either little or no control over decisions affecting their everyday life, female community members are the most disempowered as well as members of the community aged 18-30 years. The same groups have similar responses when identifying the degree to which they have the ability to make important decisions that can change the course of their life. The following identify that they are unable to change their life: female community (15.8%); community 18-30 year olds (10.7%); female reporters (16.7%) and reporters aged 18-30 years old (10.3%). Community members aged 31-40 have the lowest negative response with only 2.5% identifying that they are unable compared to 8.0% of reporters in the same age category. This set of responses confirms the profiles of all five groups: female community members and female reporters are more disempowered than males in each group. Younger community members and younger reporters are also similarly disempowered, and the most established economic and socially networked sub-group of the community respondents (those aged 31-40 years) is the least disempowered when making decisions that impact on the course of their lives.

## 4.4 Additional reintegration dimensions

### 4.4.1 Factional dimensions

Reporters have a diverse body of friends, even if in size their social networks are more limited than those of community members. In composition reporters have a similar network of friends to community members. This diverse body of friends mainly contains few fellow reporters, indicating that reporters are successful-ly reintegrating and diversifying their social networks rather than relying on old command structures and former comrades in rebellion.

### 4.4.2 Political dimensions

Political reintegration includes the extent to which reporters resort to democratic or civil means for resolving disputes and the degree to which they have faith in the workings of the state in principle. It also includes the degree to which reporters participate in collective political action and in leadership roles in the community or the economy. In the sample for this study, reporters were less politically active than community members. In the last year, half of reporters and two thirds of community members have joined other people to express concerns to GoU officials or local leaders on issues benefiting the community. So while a sizeable percentage has joined, it is still less than the general community. Also, politically active community members are twice as likely to be active multiple times. This indicates that despite reporters feeling valued and a part of the community, and in general able to be open about their past, there is still a reluctance to engage in open political activity to the extent that the community generally does.

Regarding leadership roles in the community or economy, reporters are nearly half as likely to be in a management role in comparison to the community: one quarter of reporters are in such a role compared to nearly half of the community. This ratio is largely consistent across the demographics of reporter and community. This indicates that reporters, while participating in formal networks, are not as prominent in those networks and are not in leadership roles. Anecdotally this is not universal and in some areas of Uganda, particularly where formal demobilization took place more than 10 years ago, reporters have successfully taken leadership roles in associations and in local public administration.

Political reintegration also relates to the level of confidence in the democratic state and its instruments. The study found that approximately 10% less community members than reporters trust government employees, security ministries and the police and military.

---

10    Strangers; private business owners or entrepreneurs; and government employees in the security ministries, UPDF and youth.