

4. FINDINGS FROM FIELD RESEARCH

Our study looked to analyze the migration of ex-combatants in Uganda. This included an assessment of their migration trajectory since returning from the bush, the influential factors in the process including push and pull migration factors as well as any facilitators or obstacles, and discussion of their initial and current reintegration status both economically and socially. We further looked for any cross cutting factors such as land or stigma that had impacts in both sectors. We explored the needs from the perspective of the ex-combatants in their current community, with an eye to where there is convergence with the Ugandan population as a whole and where divergence is seen between former rebels and non-combatant civilians.

4.1 Ex-combatant migration in Uganda

“When I was young, it was peaceful; no poverty, a lot of food. The population was small then and the resources were enough for everyone. But now there is a lot of poverty and conflicts and hatred.” – WNBF, Arua, M, 59

The first step to understanding ex-combatant migration was to explore how their migration was similar to and how it was different from the Ugandan population overall. Due to the lack of literature specific to ex-combatant migration, this was also critical to understanding how much of the general migration literature could apply in this case. The research found that, in keeping with the trends in Uganda as a whole, there were notable levels of migration among the ex-combatant population. Quantitative fieldwork undertaken by Dr. Anthony Finn for the purposes of evaluation during August-September 2011, not only confirmed this finding, but also found that nearly a third more reporters migrated than other community members who had not been involved or associated with rebel forces (18% compared to 11.5%) which is illustrated in tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 1 - How many times have you moved area since reporting or participating in the Amnesty Commission package?

Only reporter respondents	Frequency	Valid Percent
0	336	82.0
1	53	12.9
2	11	2.7
3	6	1.5
4	3	0.7
5	1	0.2
<i>Total moved at least once</i>	74	18.0
Total	410	100.0

Table 2 - How many times have you moved area since the end of the conflict and to your current area of residence?

Only community respondents	Frequency	Valid Percent
0	161	88.5
1	16	8.8
3	5	2.7
<i>Total moved at least once</i>	21	11.5
Total	182	100.0

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

In exploring the primary causes and factors related to migration, namely push and pull factors for migration of ex-combatant populations, there was significant convergence between ex-combatant and civilian non-combatant migration experiences. It is clear that many reporters migrate for reasons similar to the population as a whole in Uganda. The most mentioned of these include economic hardship and unemployment, lack of land or housing and marriage. Data is limited on migration statistics among the ex-combatant population thus a more specific quantitative comparison was not conducted between migration trends of ex-combatants and non-combatant civilian or country migration averages. Nevertheless, the effects of recent large-scale migration across Uganda due to insecurity, global and national economic challenges, and land tenure issues, along with traditional migration stemming from marriage and other factors, were easily observed over the course of the interviews conducted for this report, as well as through concurrent studies conducted by this research team. Our findings indicate that while reporters appeared to migrate for a handful of distinct reasons apart from the general population (which will be discussed later in Section 4.5), by and large, reporters in Uganda migrated for many of the same reasons as the general population such as those already discussed above.

However, our findings also indicate that the necessity to move for these reasons was significantly exacerbated for ex-combatants due to their lost years of education, income and work experience. Challenges also stemmed from their extended absence from family, friends and land, stigmatization amongst family and community members for their association with certain rebel groups, and having to start their lives over as an adult with very little in terms of assets, capital, skills, education, or material support from family. Within these dynamics, the economic and social factors are inextricably intertwined. Additionally, the issues of economic opportunity and land rights are clearly interconnected.

“The problem is the level of growth. We have come from the bush, but the community is at a higher level. To bridge this gap is difficult.” WNBF, Arua, M, 52

“We start from nowhere, [those who remained] have that base. We have no base, no starting life. Currently now, I am looking for means. I would have a house of my own if I had had that time back. I would have remained in school. I wanted to become an engineer.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 44

“Yes, I attribute the challenges to going to ADF. If I had stayed [home] I could have finished my education, which would have enabled me to find employment freely, which is not the case now. Because of my limited education I cannot apply for many jobs. If I hadn’t joined [the rebellion] I could have reached higher.” ADF, Kampala, F, 30

These factors also created a palpable division between ex-combatants and their civilian contemporaries following demobilization, further fueling feelings of isolation and marginalization, which also appeared to increase likelihood of migration:

“Once you have been in the bush you cannot fit into society unless you shift.¹ Many people like me must shift because they cannot go back to their communities. In Kampala it is good because there are different people and they don’t care, but in the village you cannot escape them, they are there working, everywhere on their grandfather’s land. Life is so much more difficult for me

¹ To “shift” in the Uganda contexts denotes a more permanent form of movement from one location to another; whereas to “move” commonly signifies daily pedestrian movement, *shifting* signifies relatively permanent relocation or migration, though it is often used to refer to movement associated with long-term temporary migration for remittance-associated employment.

because everything of mine was finished, they took it. I'm starting from scratch and I am old." ADF, Kampala, M, 44

"My father didn't like what I had been doing. Initially he accepted me, but his actions made it clear that he did not want me around. He would call me 'ex-rebel' and would say that I would bring him problems. He was afraid the people who I had been with would come harm him...I expected my situation would improve by moving to Kampala. In reality I didn't find jobs. When my husband learned I was a former rebel he abandoned me and the children." ADF, Kampala, F, 35

A large number of ex-combatants interviewed also reported encountering difficulties above and beyond that of their civilian counterparts in the area of housing and land tenure issues, which appeared to have resulted in further marginalizing these individuals in society, as well as impacting on decisions to migrate:

"I do feel different, I have nothing because I was a rebel. My house was destroyed and my family was displaced. I was the same as everyone before. But now I am different. Those others are good now, I am not." ADF, Kampala, M, 48

"Yeah there is a difference. Those that were in the rebel group are still starting...and some have been threatened over their ground...just threatening you that you are rebel in order for you to run away, so they grab the land." WNBF, Kampala, M, 48

Summary

- The effects of recent large-scale migration across Uganda were easily observed through the interviews.
- Findings indicate that interviewees migrated for much of the same reasons as the general population, save for a few distinct differences.
- Reasons for migration appeared to have been significantly exacerbated for interviewees by challenges stemming from their association with rebel groups.
- Such challenges also frequently appeared to create a significant divide between interviewees and their non-combatant counterparts in a variety of ways.

4.2 Demographics of the sample

In the last few decades there have been over two dozen rebel groups operating in Uganda. With the passage of the Amnesty Act combatants from any group that fought the Ugandan government since 1986 were able to lay down their weapons, emerge from hiding and accept Amnesty. The result is that the demographics of an 'ex-combatant' are varied among the many rebel groups which formed in different regions, for different purposes and used different recruiting or abduction processes. This research specifically looked to get a wide sample of rebel group, but also a representative sample of regional, gender and age variations among reporters. The interviews focused on the most populous and active rebel groups in the last few years – the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) while also gathering opinions from those in other rebel groups but to a lesser extent. The sample was also to represent a balance of the various larger rebel

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

groups. Findings of this report were derived from qualitative data collected from 121 individuals. This section aims to paint a brief picture of the statistical characteristics of the sample.

Interview questions informing this section focused on rebel group, age, age at recruitment/abduction, number of years spent with the rebel group, current marital status, education level completed, and current housing.

4.2a Rebel group

The final sample included individuals from seven rebel groups:

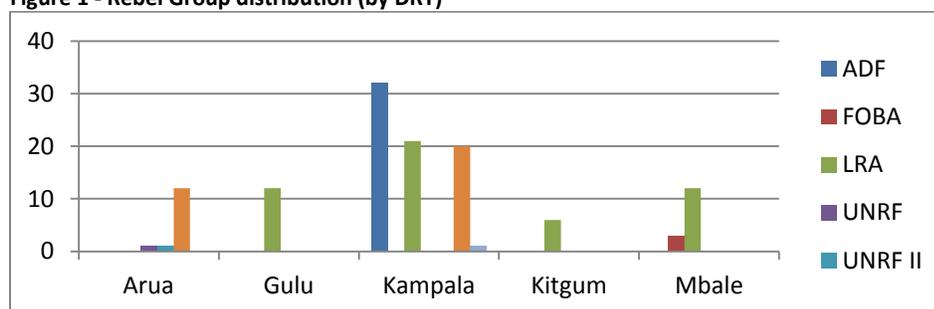
Table 3 - Sample distribution (by rebel group)

Rebel Group	Acronym	# (%) Total
Allied Democratic Forces	ADF	32 (26.4%)
Force Obote Back Army	FOBA	3 (2.5%)
Lord's Resistance Army	LRA	51 (42.1%)
National Resistance Army	NRA	1 (0.8%)
Uganda National Rescue Front	UNRF	1 (0.8%)
Uganda National Rescue Front 2	UNRF II	1 (0.8%)
West Nile Bank Front	WNBF	32 (26.4%)
TOTAL		121 (100%)

Most participants had spent time with three of Uganda's most populous rebel groups, LRA (51 reporters), ADF (32 reporters), and WNBF (32 reporters), comprising 42.1%, 26.4%, and 26.4% of the total sample, respectively.

Figure 1 below illustrates the distribution of the sample amongst the five DRT regions in which interviews were conducted.

Figure 1 - Rebel Group distribution (by DRT)

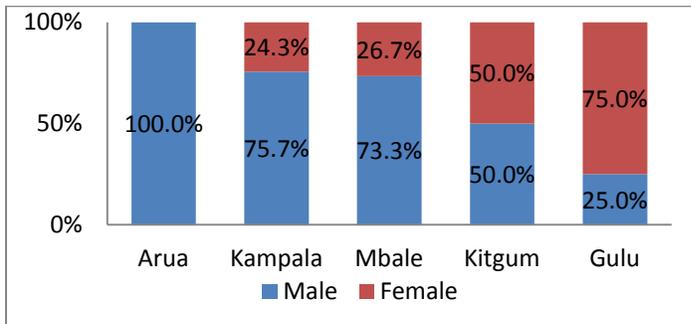


4.2b Sex

Male reporters comprised 71.9% of the overall sample, while female reporters made up 28.1% of the total sample. All interviewees from FOBA, NRA, UNRF I & II, and WNBF were male, while males made up 53.1% of the ADF sample and 62.7% of the LRA sample. Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown by sex in each of the DRT regions where interviews were conducted. Based on anecdotal data, the 100% male turnout in Arua is consistent with the history of rebel participation in that region, as rebellions in the West Nile region drew largely from male-dominated former national armies of Uganda.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

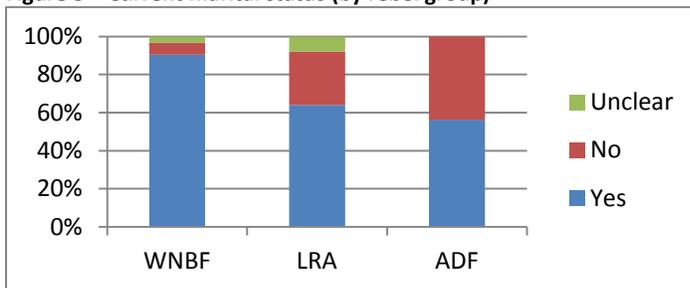
Figure 2 - Sex distribution (by DRT)



4.2c Marital Status

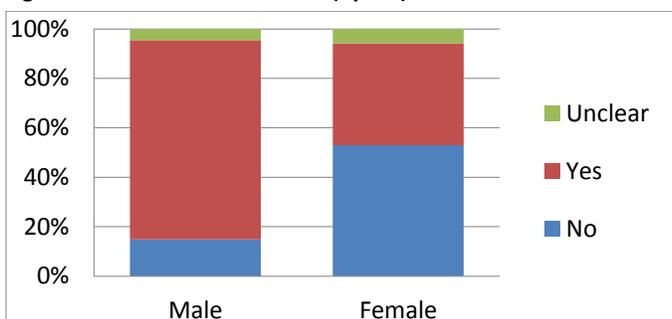
Currently married reporters made up 69.4% of the total sample, while 25.6% of reporters stated they were not married at this time. It was not possible to determine whether the remaining 5.0% of the sample were currently married from the interviews conducted with those individuals.

Figure 3 – Current marital status (by rebel group)



A significantly higher percentage of women (52.9% of women versus 14.9% of men) reported not being married at present. Based on anecdotal data, this is highly unusual given social and cultural norms in Uganda, and is potentially indicative of additional challenges faced by female reporters in Uganda in the realm of social reintegration.

Figure 4 – Current marital status (by sex)



4.2d Age

The overall average age of participants was 40.54, ranging from 18 to 69 years of age. The average age by DRTs was 23 in Kitgum, 26 in Gulu, 41 in Kampala, 45 in Mbale, and 53 in Arua. The average age of former-LRA interviewees was 35, and 38 and 50 for former- ADF and WNBF reporters, respectively.

Figure 5 - Average current age (by DRT)

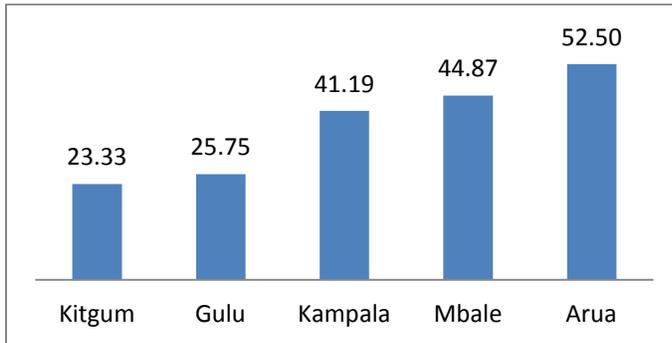
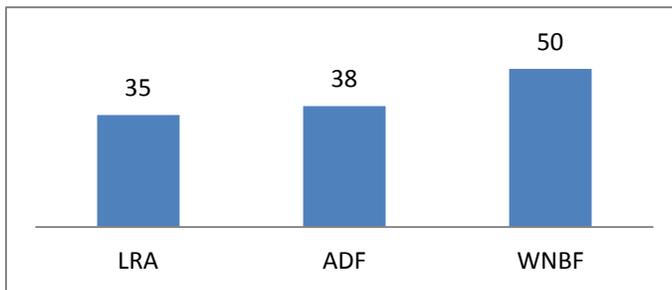
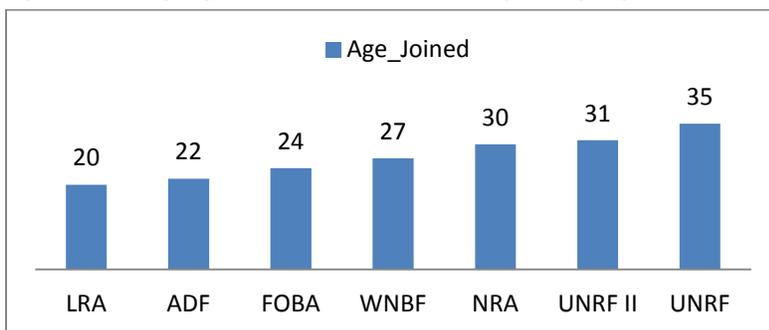


Figure 6 - Average current age (by rebel group)



The average age at abduction or recruitment by rebel forces was 20 and 22 for former LRA and ADF interviewees, respectively, while former WNBF interviewees were 27 years of age on average when they joined. The earliest age of abduction of a participant was 5 years, while 50 years was the highest age at which any participant joined a rebellion.

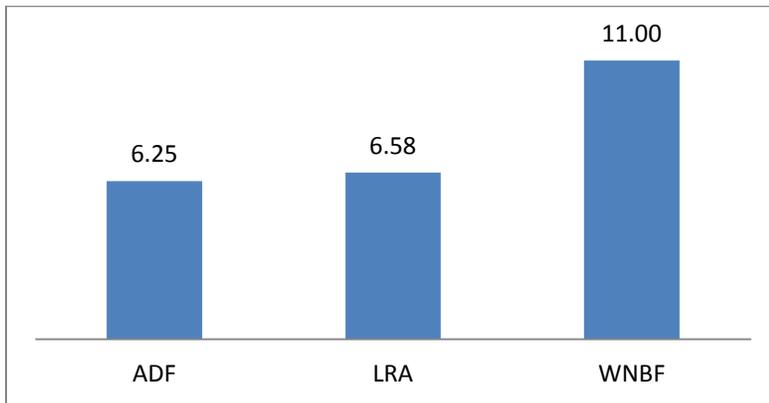
Figure 7 - Average age at abduction/recruitment by rebel group



Participants spent an average of 7.84 years with a rebellion. Former WNBF reporters spent the most time on average with 11 years, while former ADF and LRA reporters spent an average of 6.25 and 6.58 years, respectively.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

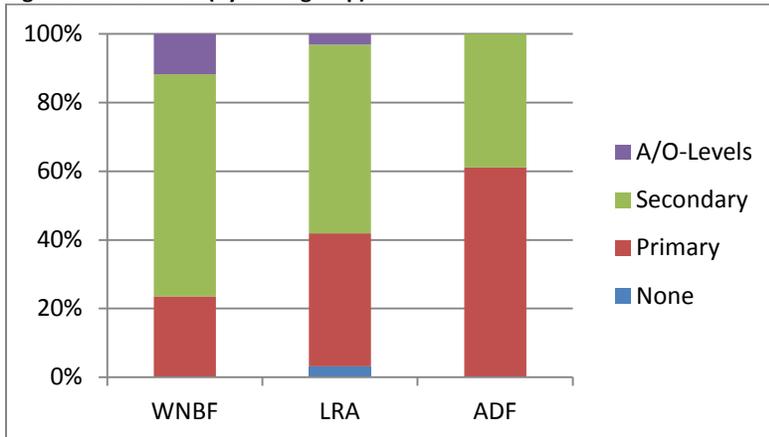
Figure 8 - Average # of years with rebellion (by rebel group)



4.2e Education

Interviewees reported completing various levels of education, with former WNBF ex-combatants reporting the highest (64.7% of those whom were asked completed no more than some secondary level education), while former ADF participants reported completing the least education (61.1% of those asked completed some primary only).

Figure 9 - Education (by rebel group)

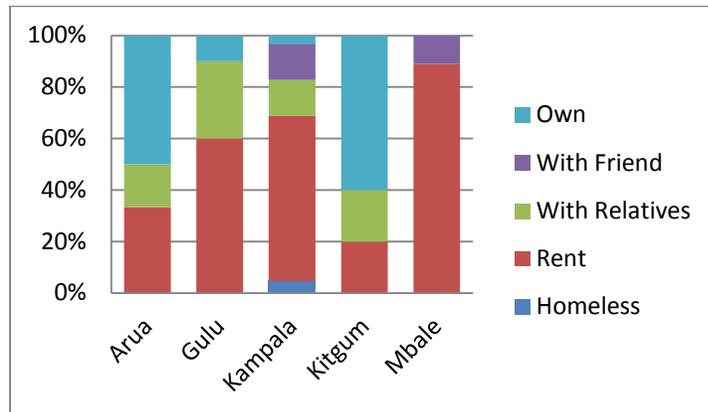


4.2f Housing status

Participants residing in and around Arua (50%) and Kitgum (21.4%) report the highest percentage of ownership within DRT. Mbale, Kampala, and Gulu regions appear to have the highest percentages of reporters renting (within DRT). Percentages are based on data from those interviews touching on the subject of housing type and status.

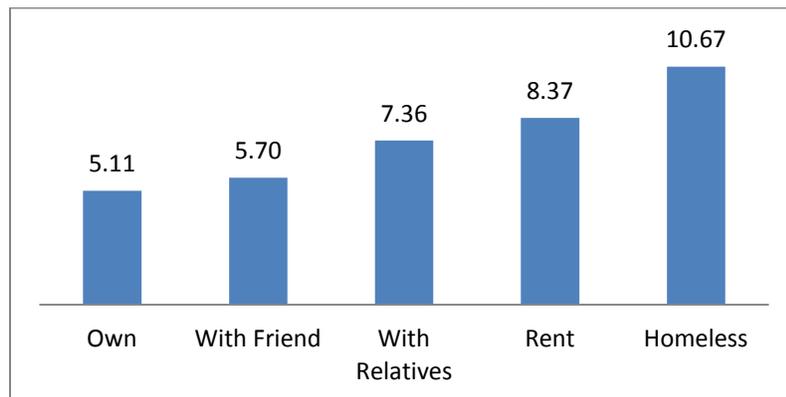
Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Figure 10 - Housing Status (by DRT)



Those interviewees who reported currently having nowhere to stay (3 interviewees) spent an average of nearly 11 years with rebel groups, while those who currently owned housing (9 interviewees) reported having spent an average of just over 5 years in a rebellion. Those who were currently renting spent an average of 8.37 years with a rebel group, and those currently staying with friends or relatives spent 5.7 and 7.36 years in a rebellion, respectively.

Figure 11 - Number of years with rebellion (by housing)



4.2g Summary and conclusion

- The sample included individuals from eight rebel groups and was predominately comprised of reporters formerly associated with the LRA, ADF, and WNBF.
- The ratio of males to females was roughly 80/20, with males accounting for 100% of the sample of former WNBF, UNRF I & II, FOBA and NRA participants.
- Married reporters made up 69.4% of the sample, with a significantly higher percentage of women reporting not being married (52.9% versus 14.9% for men).
- The overall average age was 40.54, with ages of participants ranging from 18 to 69 years. Of the three major rebel groups, former LRA reporters were the youngest on average (35), while former WNBF reporters had the highest average age (50).
- On average, former LRA had been abducted or recruited at the earliest age (20) while former WNBF possessed the highest (27). The earliest age of abduction was 5 years, while the oldest age of recruitment was age 50.

- Participants spent an average of 7.84 years with rebellions, with former WNBF reporting the highest average time (11 years) and former ADF reporting the lowest (6.25 years).
- Level of education varied greatly by reporter, though 64.7% of former WNBF reported completing no higher than some secondary school, and 61.1% of former ADF reported completing no higher than some primary school.
- Participants residing in and around Arua reported the highest percentage of land ownership (50%). Those who reported having no place to stay had spent a significantly higher than average length of time with a rebel group while those who currently owned land had spent a significantly lower than average length of time.

The study attempted to look at a wide range of individuals who had formerly been associated with rebel groups and who had also migrated from their community of origin, and based on the widely varying demographic data collected, it appears this was indeed the case. While reasons for migration among the sample could be delineated to some extent through marital status, age, education, and housing status, rebel group and sex appeared to determine migration factors to a much greater extent, which will be discussed in further detail in the following sections.

4.3 Snapshot of present circumstances

To understand the individuals' current needs and the results of their migration, we explored the present circumstances. This included an exploration of their current living conditions as well as their level of social and economic integration in that community. There is a wealth of literature on rural-urban migration and the impacts on the individuals found there (Sommers, 2003) but it was important to get a purely ex-combatant and Uganda specific understanding. Much of the migration found was either rural-rural or from a rural to a somewhat larger town, but perhaps still not a district capital or other larger city. Additionally the research looked at the current interplay of economic, social and political factors, which Taylor posits are ever intertwined in the reintegration process (Taylor et al., 2006).

This report comprises the first-person accounts and anecdotal offerings of 121 individuals who spent time with a rebel group and chose not to return indefinitely to their communities of origin after demobilization. The paths which led them to the five DRT locations in which they were interviewed were as varied as the reporters themselves, though many of their experiences shared common threads which served as the basis for this report. Indeed, it is important to emphasize that while the majority of interviews took place in the city center of the nation's capital, Kampala, many of the reporters interviewed in that location live in what might be considered suburban or rural areas outside of town, and the experiences of such individuals may actually share more commonalities with those individuals interviewed and currently living elsewhere.

The focus of this section is to paint a picture of the current life circumstances of the individuals included in this study and the places in which they have arrived. In general, the reporters' lives at the time of this study seemed consumed with trying to move on with their lives in a productive and positive way. Those who had not been able to find work were not happy about being out of work or without a purposeful activity to pass the time. Most did not wish to speak about the past or about their involvement in rebel groups and only wished to look forward. How they had come to be in these particular places, or whether each was contemplating another move in the future will be discussed in later sections. As of summer 2011, however, this is where things stood.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Interview questions informing this section encompassed community of origin, migration destinations (past and current), and other basic demographic data; demobilization experience, challenges faced, training received, rites and rituals, reasons for migrating, self-assessment of reintegration, comparisons to community members, other reporters' experiences, degree of openness about the past, assistance received, family and community acceptance, current and past employment, meeting basic needs, land ownership, involvement with community, and involvement in economic associations. Publicly-available reference data, maps and geographic measurements, informed analysis of community size and distance between communities, though a portion of the sample was asked to describe the size of and distance between communities.

4.3a Ex-combatant destinations

While participants were interviewed in the capital city of Kampala and four major district centers² (Arua, Gulu, Kitgum and Mbale), a significant portion of the sample traveled into town from rural outlying areas and nearby smaller district capitals. Among the reporters, 57% were currently residing in the Kampala metropolitan area, 29.8% in major district capitals, 12.4% in rural areas or other non-district capital towns and villages, and 0.8% in other district capitals.

Within the sample, a much higher percentage of ADF (87.5% compared with 41.2% LRA and 59.4% WNBF) had migrated to Kampala, which may have been due in part to the close proximity of most former-ADF reporters' communities of origin and also to the fact that interviews were not conducted in the southwest of the country therefore ADF ex-combatants who may have moved within that region would not be included in this sample.

All participants who were currently residing in rural areas or smaller towns/villages reported receiving the amnesty reinsertion package, while 63.2% of those living in Kampala and 36.8% living in major district capitals reported having not yet received the package. A total of 85.2% who reported a primary need at present for startup capital were living in Kampala, while nearly half (44.4%) of those requesting additional training were living in rural areas. Over 75% of interviewees who had not received any training were living in Kampala. Kampala is an attractive place for reporters and non-reporters alike, as is the case with many urban capitals across the globe. While Kampala may offer the promise of more employment opportunities than other areas of Uganda, living in Kampala is a hard life for most, as securing well-paid, reliable employment is rare and challenging, crime and poor sanitation persist, and rent and basic costs can be very high.

"I didn't have peace, so I found my way [to Kampala]. Kampala was not what I expected -- I had high hopes of employment. I moved to Kampala in 2003 and got a job in 2008." ADF, Kampala, M, 47

"[In Kampala] there are too many thugs...and things are expensive. And where we are staying there is poor sanitation." LRA, Kampala, M, 23

In addition to voicing the disadvantages of urban life, interviewees frequently mentioned the advantages of rural living, usually tied to their community of origin:

² "Major District center" denotes a district capital with a population greater than 350,000, with the exception of Kitgum, which is perceived as a major center due to the high number of NGOs and other service provider-related opportunities available there.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

“Everyone here in Kampala has the same problems -- they are not different because you were a fighter. My wife does not have work, but if we lived in the village she would farm. [In places like] Koboko, which is a new district, there are more jobs.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 45

“I don’t like to stay here [in Kampala] mostly -- I was wanting to stay in Masindi, but because of poverty I had to come here. Even the money which I am working is [enough for] only rent and food. At least in the village I can dig and do a small, small thing. If I could have any money I could just go back, because there is no use of staying here.” LRA, Kampala, M, 40 (The commonly used term for subsistence, small scale or individual farming in Uganda is ‘digging.’)

Despite such challenges, many reporters chose to stay in Uganda’s largest city due to the increased anonymity and open-mindedness, and lack of stigmatization and discrimination that Kampala stood to offer.

“Kampala is better because there is no stigma and no discrimination. I am no longer afraid the ADF will come get me because they don’t have the time to witch hunt people in Kampala.” ADF, Kampala, F, 35

“Kampala is good, but things are getting worse, because the money which I’m working for is too little for me. It is a peaceful way of living, because when I go back to the village I still remember what was happening -- but the problem is food -- with the little money we have, there is no where you can dig [in the city].” LRA, Kampala, M, 29

Those who were currently living in other parts of the country were facing similar challenges but reported higher satisfaction overall with their current situation.

“[Reporters] live here in Arua because it is better, we can get support from brothers and access services here. [People] are much more accepting here as well than in the other communities.” WNBF, Arua, M, 59

One reporter from Yumbe who was currently residing in Arua said:

“People run away [from Yumbe] to places where there is freedom. People make allegations in Yumbe and places like that which forces people to come to Arua. In Arua, there is nothing like that.” UNRF I & II, Arua, M, 60

While generally interviewees reported better conditions in communities outside of Kampala, many reporters were still facing significant challenges in those places.

“I moved to Butambala because my brother was there -- but not many opportunities, just digging. The neighbors treat me better, but things are not good for jobs, so I often come to Kampala to look for work.” ADF, Butambala, M, 56

Several interviewees also spoke of having moved abroad to Kenya or Sudan in search of opportunities, which ultimately proved too challenging to sustain.

“I considered Nairobi -- I went there in 2003, but I did not find work. And I went again. I stayed for 2 weeks and came back. I had no friends or family. I went for business with a friend. We had heard there might be an opportunity, but it was not good.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 44

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Additionally, it was found that a much higher percentage of females migrated to rural areas than males (23.5% versus 8%), which appeared to be linked to marriage and will be discussed in further detail later in the report.

And some simply had no other choice:

"It's not that I like Mbale, but I have nowhere else to go." FOBA, Mbale, M, 43

4.3b Social reintegration

Generally, most interviewees reported feeling like they were a part of their current communities. A clear majority of those living in Gulu, Kitgum and Mbale reported feeling integrated, but results were less clear cut among those living in Arua and Kampala. Two-thirds of reporters living in rural areas appear to feel content with their engagement within their communities, while results were unclear in other areas. Of those who spent one month or less at home before moving to another destination, two-thirds feel like they are a part of their current community.

On the whole, the reporters who were able to be open about their past with a rebel group seemed to fair the best, though only 37.8% of interviewees reported being totally open about their past. Data collected suggested that male reporters were generally more open about their past than women, with 66% of males reporting that they share this information to some extent, while only 42% of women said that they were open to any degree. The highest percentage among rebel groups of reporters who remained secretive about their past were former ADF (57.7% tell no one, 34.6% tell some), while 72.7% of former WNBF reporters were completely open about their past. Unmarried reporters were considerably more unlikely to share the fact that they were a rebel, as 68% of those who were not currently married reported not being open about their past with anyone.

Of those who received the reinsertion package, 58.5% reported being completely open about their past, while 61.5% of those who did not receive the package said they tell no one about their past, though results were mixed amongst those who had received additional assistance. This could potentially be attributed to the difficulty in hiding one's status as a reporter once they had received the telltale mattress, seeds, and 263,000 Uganda shillings. A total of 76.9% of those who were currently living in a rural area were completely open about their past (compared to 50% of those living in major district capitals and 23.1% in Kampala), and indeed, a sizeable 80.6% of those who were not open about their past as a rebel with anyone resided in Kampala.

With regards to current levels of stigmatization faced by the sample, those who were experiencing the least issues with stigmatization were living in Kampala, while those facing the highest levels resided in rural areas. The data also suggested that an elevated percentage of those currently facing stigma were also currently not able to find work.

Several reporters surmised that those facing the greatest levels of stigmatization and discrimination may have had a hand in bringing misery upon themselves.

"Some people come back and still have aggressive mentality -- inhuman mentality," revealed Beatrice (24/F/LRA). "They find themselves in the situation that they are not accepted -- some have raped girls. These people live in rejection, they feel disowned -- some families say things like 'this is not my child.'" LRA, Gulu, F, 24

However, the factors that have appeared to most directly impact on stigmatization in any community were community size and population, extent to which the community had been affected by rebel atrocities, and the level of effort by local leaders to educate the public in peace, dialogue and reconciliation issues.

4.3c Economic reintegration

Interviews with reporters probed questions related to past, current and future employment opportunities and their ability to secure long-term livelihoods. While 70%³ of those who were interviewed reported being able to currently find work, this figure is deceiving, as most of the reporters were continuing to struggle to secure long-term employment or receive wages that met or exceeded their basic needs.

One standout group amongst those who had been able to find livable-wage, permanent employment were reporters who were currently working as security guards in Kampala. According to several interviewees, security companies had been actively recruiting former rebel combatants to perform this work in Kampala, which had been a significant pull factor in the migration of these individuals. These individuals described faring better than the average interviewee in most study areas. However, this type of work was reportedly off-limits to women. Despite this, the employment rate in this study still remained around 70% for both men and women⁴.

However, most reporters who were able to generate income in Kampala were not working as security guards, but rather having to resort to performing unskilled day-labor work as porters, construction laborers, and hawkers (roving vendors). While these individuals reported being able to find work, it was hardly enough to cover food and rent from one day to the next. Whatever the nature of the job, reporters generally described feeling more content and reintegrated when they had something to do to pass the time, whether they were paid or not.

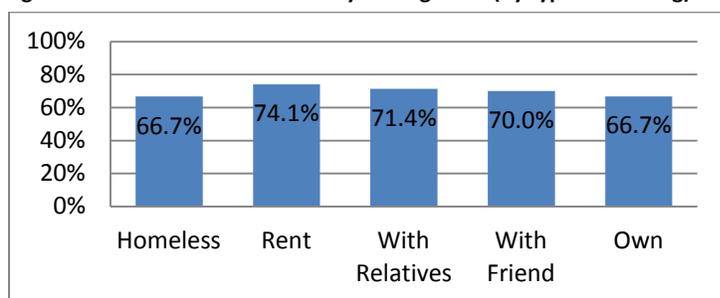
Sample data in the area of employment also indicated that a substantially higher percentage of former-LRA reporters were currently finding work (80.4%) compared to their ADF (68.8%) and WNBF (59.4%) counterparts. Perhaps not surprisingly, an elevated percentage (43.8%) of those who wanted to leave their current location for a new location (not community of origin) was currently unable to find work (compared with 22% who wanted to return home and 17.9% who planned to stay).

Factors which appeared to have little or no impact on one's currently employment status in this study were education level, training, current housing situation and land ownership. Those with only some primary education tended to fare better in the job market (85.2% currently employed versus 68.4% of those who completed some secondary education). Those who reported to have received training since demobilization were just as likely to be currently earning a wage, and whether or not the reporter currently owned land, rented, was staying with family and friends, or was homeless had little to no bearing on employment status (see Figure 12 below).

³ See employment table

⁴ *ibid*

Figure 12 - Ex-combatants currently finding work (by type of housing)



Several reporters interviewed demonstrated elevated levels of economic and social reintegration through various activities in which they had involved themselves. Some, like 25-year-old Grace and 24-year-old Beatrice, both currently living in Gulu, showed ambition and resourcefulness that exceeded that of many of their peers. Grace formed a group of communal farmers in her town called "winyo-lokber group" which presently had five members, while Beatrice used the proceeds from housekeeping to start a small business.

"I run a grocery [stall] in the market selling vegetables, tomatoes, onions. I worked as a housemaid for two months, then invested that money into my market stall. I'm a member of Kalulu [savings association]. We make a monthly contribution and receive money in turn. Part of it goes to school fees, part of it reimburses business, increases stock, part of it goes to rent and to feed my children." LRA, Gulu, F, 24

While Beatrice also stated that savings associations such as *Kalulu* were common in Northern Uganda, very few of the reporters interviewed for this study in the North appeared to have taken advantage of such opportunities. One frequently cited reason for non-participation seemed to be basic lack of capital beyond what was needed to sustain daily living.

4.3d Summary and conclusion

- While paths of migration varied substantially amongst the sample, experiences of interviewees shared several common threads.
- Interviewees seemed most focused on moving forward in productive and positive ways.
- Overall, 57% were currently residing in Kampala, 29.8% in major district capitals, and 12.4% in rural areas and villages, with less than 1% currently residing in minor district capitals.
- All participants living in rural areas/villages received the reinsertion package, while only 36.8% of those living in major district capitals reported not receiving the package.
- Of those needing startup capital, 85.2% were currently residing in Kampala, while nearly half of those needing training were in rural areas, though 75% of interviewees who received no training were living in Kampala.
- Kampala was found to be both a very attractive and challenging destination for interviewees. Challenges in Kampala also fueled a reevaluation of rural life and communities of origin for many interviewees, though all have yet to move back.
- Those living outside of Kampala reported higher satisfaction overall with their current situation, though most still faced significant challenges.
- Several interviewees attempted moves to neighboring countries before settling elsewhere in Uganda.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

- Generally, interviewees reported feeling like they were a part of their current communities, with two-thirds of those living in rural areas reporting feelings of contentment with community engagement.
- Reporters who were open about their past appeared to fare better than those who were not open. Male reporters were found to be more open than women, and former ADF appeared to be the most secretive.
- The least stigmatization was felt in Kampala, while the most was felt in rural areas. Several reporters attributed stigmatization to the individual's actions rather than the community, though community size and population, rebel atrocities, and local leaders appeared to impact on presence or absence of stigmatization.
- Though 70% of interviewees were finding work, most reporters continued to struggle to secure long-term, livable wages.
- While most reporters in Kampala have been generating income in the informal sector, many male interviewees reported being recruited by security firms in Kampala, significantly impacting their economic and social reintegration.
- Former-LRA were finding the most work while WNBF were finding the least. Education, training, current housing and land ownership did not seem to impact one's ability to secure employment.
- Several participants have found success in economic and social reintegration through participation in community activities, economic associations and business ventures.

Interviewee desires to move forward in productive and positive ways was evidenced in their wish to find even unpaid employment, the importance they placed on being accepted into their communities, and their enthusiasm when talking about the future for themselves and their family. An important finding in this section is that those residing outside of Kampala appeared more integrated and content with their situation than those living in Kampala. In fact, few interviewees outside of Kampala spoke of wanting to actually move to Kampala, and most living in Kampala frequently voiced a desire to return home or elsewhere. In essence, those who had migrated to Kampala were still searching for something significant (employment, startup capital, land, housing, other assistance), while those who had moved elsewhere had largely found what they had originally moved for, yet perhaps encountered new challenges. Experiences also varied significantly by rebel group and sex. Age was also a factor, but found to be tied with being born out of wedlock and/or raised in the bush, as well as to a rebel group.

4.4 Migration data

The next step in understanding the migration decisions and patterns of ex-combatants was to delve into the migration trajectories of the individuals and patterns of the group as a whole. We anticipated gaining a deeper understanding not only of the step-by-step path taken but also a background on the factors surrounding their migration and sometimes re-migration or return migration at a later date. Much of the literature on DDR points to the draw to one's community of origin (Uvin, 2007) following demobilization, which was another area explored through these questions.

Interviews offered a deeper look into the migration narratives of 121 individuals formerly associated with rebel groups in Uganda. Data collected uncovered major paths of migration, distance traveled, and size of communities involved. This section discusses the findings culled from migration data, along with a discussion of emerging themes and patterns. The underlying causes and motivations for these findings are discussed later in Section 4.5.

Interview questions informing this section encompassed community of origin, migration destinations (past and current), and other basic demographic data; it also probed topics related to length of stay in community of origin, desire to resettle, and land ownership. As in Section 4.3, publicly-available reference data, maps and geographic measurements informed analysis of community size and distance between communities, though a portion of the sample was asked to describe the size of and distance between communities.

4.4a Trajectories

While reporter experiences varied greatly, the majority of those who participated in this study followed one of two migration paths. A total of 58.3% of the sample initially returned to their community of origin before migrating to the community in which they were currently residing, while 21.7% of those interviewed bypassed their community of origin altogether, traveling directly to the community where they reside currently after demobilization. The remaining individuals traveled some other path involving multiple moves, migration abroad briefly, or another combination not previously discussed. Overall, 60.9% spent more than one month in their community of origin before migrating, 15.7% spent one month or less, and nearly a quarter of the sample have not returned. Data from this study suggests a variety of factors driving paths of migration, which will be discussed in further detail in Section 4.5.

4.4b Distance traveled

The sample was also divided into three major categories based on the distance each reporter had migrated. Overall, three-quarters of the sample migrated 100km or farther from home, nearly one quarter migrated less than 100 kilometers, and the rest (2.5%) oscillated between locations.

Nearly all those interviewed who migrated to Kampala traveled 100km or more to get there, while most who migrated to a district capital or rural area traveled only a short distance. Reporters from larger towns were more likely to migrate farther than those leaving smaller towns. While an overwhelming majority (78.1%) of those who did not pass through an official center traveled over 100km to arrive at their current destination, over half of those who passed through a reception center migrated only a short distance. In fact, those who received assistance of any kind with their reintegration also tended to not travel far at all. Of those who migrated in excess of 100km, 85.4% currently wish to return to their community of origin.

4.4c Size of origin and destination communities

Though most reporters interviewed were currently residing in Kampala, participants came from a variety of communities – from rural villages, to large district centers. Generally, interviewees had migrated from rural areas (49.6%), though 24.8% had left behind major district capitals, and 25.6% had migrated from smaller district capitals. No individual interviewed in any region had originated from Kampala.

Additionally, nearly all the reporters (93.3%) who were currently residing in rural areas had migrated from another rural area. It is perhaps worth noting here that, while many respondents residing in Kampala or other urban areas voiced a desire to resettle back to their more rural communities of origin, or perhaps another rural community for land, few had actually left Kampala or a large district capital for a smaller town or village. Given the large percentage of reporters interviewed for this sample in Kampala, that may not sound surprising. However, those interviewed in other areas who reported currently living in rural areas had also reported migrating from another rural area. As the literature in this area suggests, it can be much more difficult for those accustomed to urban life to leave that lifestyle for village life than the reverse.

Of the interviewees who currently owned their own house and land, 77.8% migrated from a rural community, as well. Based on responses and anecdotal data, this reflects the higher likelihood of land ownership in rural versus urban areas, given increased land availability and lower population density, and the large number of reporters who still own land in their community of origin but were forced to move for a variety of factors (discussed later in Section 4.5). It is unlikely that this correlation suggests that finding land and building a house in a new community has been easier for individuals from rural areas than it has been for more urbanized respondents.

4.4d Summary and conclusion

- Interviews pointed to major themes related to paths for migration, distance traveled and sizes of communities involved.
- Participants followed one of two main trajectories: 58.3% returned to their community of origin before migrating elsewhere, while 21.7% migrated directly to a non-origin community.
- Three-quarters of the sample migrated 100km or farther from their community of origin. Those who had migrated the farthest tended to have traveled from more urban communities, bypassed reception centers, and reported receiving little to no assistance.
- Nearly half of the sample migrated from rural areas and villages, while the remaining interviewees all migrated from district capitals; nearly all who migrated to a rural area had traveled from another rural area. No one interviewed had migrated from Kampala.
- Most who currently own their own land migrated from a rural area or village, likely linked to many interviewees reporting having to leave their land behind in rural areas for a variety of reasons.

It is not surprising that most interviewees would wish to return home immediately following demobilization, given the level of trauma and need for assistance that familiarity and established networks could potentially assuage. What is surprising, perhaps, are the large numbers of interviewees who had either bypassed home despite a strong desire to return, or were taken home despite an overarching desire to move elsewhere. On some level, this finding contradicts the literature asserting that all migrants exercise a choice to move, despite the circumstances. Yet, as explored later, such was not the case with a great many of the interviewees.

4.5 Influential factors in the decision to migrate

To further understand the migration currently seen with Ugandan ex-combatants, this research assessed the push and pull factors while incorporating the facilitators and obstacles impacting each individual's choice to migrate. This included social and economic factors both within communities of origin and at new communities of re-settlement. Here we looked to explore what Lindley calls "the complex causation of migration in these contexts" (Lindley, 2008). In the Ugandan context, issues of economic hardship, land and stigma were found to be very prominent.

The primary reason for ex-combatant migration was economic hardship. However, some interviewees reported being forced to move for reasons specific to their involvement with rebel groups. These factors included:

- Extreme stigma;
- Lost years of work experience, employment income and education, reducing their current opportunities (depending on age joined);

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

- Grabbing or selling of land due to either extended absence, assumed death or stigma;
- Loss of all material possessions including destruction of house (having to start over from nothing), which was similar to non-combatant experiences in areas devastated by war, but specific to reporters in areas where houses of known rebels had been targeted either by the government or by the community members. Any documentation of land rights was often also lost during this time/struggle;
- Nothing to return to/ family relocated or deceased due to violence or illness;
- Security guard job offers in Kampala;
- Offer of additional education or skills building from NGOs/others in larger cities;
- Draw of large mosques and churches in larger cities that are known to assist those in need;
- Fear of re-abduction or death if found by rebel group;
- Reporter network in Kampala for men - many are able to utilize this network for housing and informal employment opportunities;
- Long-term injuries impacting ability to do certain work, such as farming or other physical labor jobs;
- Bad memory associations with an ex-combatant's home, community or local environment; and
- Desire to be close to the Amnesty Commission headquarters in Kampala in the event that additional funds or services are made available.

Expectedly, a combination of factors often emerged from the individuals' choices, so factors should also be looked at together as well as individually. In addition, certain factors were often found in clusters such as stigma, land, and fear for physical safety; lack of land, home and economic challenges; community stigma and marriage challenges; etc. Many of these factors were similar to those of other Ugandans, but have been frequently exacerbated by ex-combatant-specific realities.

"Many of the ones that used to fight had to move to Kampala - because [they] had no job, and [there] some were afraid of their own families, so when this one came from Sudan, then the one in Uganda saw them come back and want land, so they have the problem for the land and come to Kampala to look for their own place. Also they have some witch doctors that put something in the tea or food, so they are afraid they will be poisoned. Maybe you get an elder brother who has so many children and the land is small, so they fight him so you will leave there. The ones with this problem, they plan to just stay in Kampala, and try to buy land here and stay here."
WNBF, Kampala, M, 50

In addition to basic demographic and migration data, interview questions informing this section probed topics related to reasons for leaving/moving to a location, migration decision process, demobilization experience, challenges faced, training and other assistance received, rites and rituals, family and community reception, comparisons to other reporters and community members, friendships, openness about the past, current and past employment, meeting basic needs, land ownership and access, involvement with community and community activities (worship, associations, etc.), and hopes and desires (past, present and future).

4.5a Rationale for return to community of origin

As mentioned earlier in Section 4.4a, the most common migration trajectory of the sample was first to return to one's community of origin before migrating elsewhere. While returning home is not migration,

considering the reasons behind their return home as a first destination is important to understanding subsequent migration. Similarly, those returning during the ongoing conflict were often taken to an IDP camp to be reunited with family or next of kin, and many younger ex-combatants spent the majority of their formative years in these temporary communities. Those who were taken to IDP camps and later resettled to their original community were not considered migrants for this study.

The choice to return

For those interviewees who were given the decision of where to go next following demobilization, the most common reason given for returning to one's community of origin was that it was where they were from, or simply, that it was "home."

"No, I did not think of going anywhere else -- I only thought of going home." LRA, Lukwor, M, 24

"Because that was my place where I was born and I grew up there, without knowing that these people would turn against me, this is where I belong." ADF, Kampala, M, 35

"I opted to go there because it was the only home I knew. I wasn't expecting to go back to my village -- I was expecting to be resettled somewhere else. I wanted to go to a different place." LRA, Mbale, F, 41

Immediate family members were often the driving force behind the decision to return home or to an IDP camp.

"I didn't know they would hate me, so I wanted to go home -- to my family -- to my home." ADF, Kampala, M, 48

"There was no reason for me to go anywhere else. I needed food and someone to take care of me and show me how life goes so I lived with my big brother." LRA, Bungatira, M, 24

In the case in which immediate family members were missing or deceased, many reporters cited returning to their community of origin for the social security and emotional comfort other relatives could potentially provide.

Irrespective of the presence of living family members, housing or support, some reporters simply cited the wish to return to the "place of my people" as the primary reason for returning to their community of origin. In many regions of Uganda land is held and allocated by the clan, therefore clan inheritance was also an important driver in the choice of destination. If the reporter had no inheritance, they were frequently given access to cultivate the land of extended family members or neighbors.

Many reporters were very interested in returning to their homeland, still others revealed that, irrespective of personal desire, they simply had nowhere else to go.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"I went back and lived with my mother and sister and her children. It was my only option. I did not have anywhere else to go. I was not worried because even if the LRA came back, I had no other place to go." LRA, Kitgum, M, 26

While the vast majority of interviewees reported returning to their home community after leaving the rebel group, for many, this meant returning to their community in an IDP camp. The desire to reside in a safe and secure location largely influenced this decision.

No choice

According to interviewees, those ex-combatants who reported through official reception centers were not given a choice to which community they would be returned at reinsertion – by and large, all were expected to return to their community of origin. One-third of interviewees who discussed their initial return indicated that it was either not their choice to return or that they did not have any input into the decision to return to their community of origin or IDP camp where next of kin resided at that time.

However, in the case of ex-combatants, this idea of choice may be influenced by the reinsertion phase of the DDR process. While the process varied extensively, DDR often included transportation to and reinsertion in one's previous home without the input of the ex-combatant.

"When we all came back, we were all at zero, and were all by regulation sent to our respective villages -- so my husband was also taken back to his village, and I to mine, because we did not have anything to come here to Kampala." ADF, Kampala, F, 30

"They returned us there -- it wasn't really a choice -- they wanted to return us to our homes, but people were just digging and doing nothing at all. I wanted to settle in town and would have liked assistance with that." LRA, Mbale, F, 34

"I didn't plan on going back to Luwero, it was the Amnesty's duty to take me back -- they wanted to hand me back over to the parents." ADF, Luwero/Mukono, F, 39

The result was that some were happily reunified with their family, while others that knew they would not be accepted back into their communities or would face other issues there were returned regardless.

"The [Amnesty Commission] had made the decision but I knew I would not be accepted there." LRA, Mbale, M, 45

"I did not want to go back. I was afraid of the local people -- the people there were angry with me that I joined the LRA." LRA, Mbale, M, 62

"Those who trained us took us back home. It was not my choice, it was [the Amnesty Commission's]. There was nothing back there for me. My dad had been there, but he died. For me, I did not have land. According to our culture, it is the father who gives land -- land was given, but my father died and others took the land." LRA, Mbale, M, 45

This finding does not seem unreasonable, given that one of the major purposes of providing amnesty to ex-combatants in Uganda (as outlined by the Amnesty Act, itself) was to assist former rebels in reconciling with, and rebuilding, *their communities*, which generally assumes resettlement of a rebel to an original community. Furthermore, simply granting all reporters' wishes to relocate anywhere they

chose after demobilization would have been nearly impossible, given the Amnesty Commission's lack of resources and funding for such endeavors, and the very unlikely willingness of non-combatant populations (especially those who had been displaced due to violence and land issues) to support such an initiative.

Still, it is important to recognize that nearly half of all interviewees likely had no choice in where they were taken after demobilization, which has potentially profound implications for the migration of reporters far into the future. Data from this study suggests a strong correlation between age, migration trajectory, and demobilization processing type (transit center, prison, or direct to civilian society). Based on interviews, younger reporters were far more likely to be processed through an official reception center, and thus, were resettled to their communities of origin in most cases. Older ex-combatants generally did not spend time in a reception center, but rather spent time in prison or returned directly to civilian life from their respective rebellion. Within the sample, this population made up the majority of respondents who bypassed their community of origin altogether, opting to resettle elsewhere. Consequently, one might assume that as younger reporters (who were returned to their communities of origin) age, they will likely begin to encounter the same push/pull factors that older reporters have already faced in the areas of sustainable livelihoods, land, marriage, caring for dependents, and the effects of long-term stigmatization (discussed further in Section 4.5c and below).

No return

As discussed in Section 4.4, many reporters did not return home first, for reasons ranging from fear of reprisal, discrimination, and even death, to the belief that better opportunities awaited elsewhere. Still others feared returning home empty-handed. Many also cited the taking of their land by others over the course of their time with rebel groups as a major reason for not resettling. It is important to note that, while such individuals may not have spent time in their community of origin before migrating elsewhere, push factors related to community of origin were indistinguishable in most cases from push factors for those who first returned.

4.5b Facilitators and obstacles

As discussed previously in the literature review, a number of factors influences the decision to migrate, including those which facilitate movement and those which restrict movement, regardless of desire to move to/from a given location. Networks and language were found to be two key facilitators amongst interviewees, and the lack thereof was also found to be a significant obstacle for some individuals as well.

Family and social networks

Facilitating factors, such as having existing family, friends and faith networks at a particular destination, appeared to mitigate the effects of obstacles such as fear, lack of income and local language skills for many of the interviewees. While family and friends emerged as a major pull factor for several individuals, many other interviewees who reported migrating for far different reasons, such as extreme stigma or joblessness, revealed that such networks made their move possible.

"I had some brothers here who could support me a bit. Life [back] in the village was horrible."
FOBA, Mbale, M, 43

"My friend convinced me to move and sell charcoal." ADF, Kampala, M, 45

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

“When I first came back I stayed with friends for almost 2 years, because I couldn’t find work, then I found work and started renting my own place.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 42

While less common, some reporters who returned decided together to move away and be a support network for one another in the new community.

“My friends and I moved here together -- about six of us -- we moved here from different places.” LRA, Mbale, M, 47

“I had friends here -- the ones I came back with -- there were four of them. One went to the village, the other three decided to stay here.” LRA, Mbale, M, 39

“At first I stayed with some friends -- ones I had fought with in the LRA. I stayed with them for three months. We picked Mbale because people are friendlier here.” LRA, Mbale, M, 42

Some found a place to stay through previous professional connections:

“I had a friend who was a teacher who lived in Mbale – they offered to take me in (before the abductions I was a primary school teacher).” LRA, Mbale, F, 40

Some of those interviewed sought out a connection through their former rebel group colleagues:

“It is good to have friends. In fact now we have forgotten about the past, but [former WNBF] are many here [in Kampala] -- now everybody is having his job, and if you don’t have a job you can go to [other former WNBF] and if they get a job, they can call you.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 50

“It was my colleague’s idea who lived here in Kampala who encouraged me to move here. I stayed with her for about three years.” ADF, Kampala, F, 35

“I knew people there from time spent in vocational training.” LRA, Mbale, M, 45

Several interviewees who arrived knowing no one reported finding a place to stay through connections made in their community of worship:

“Now for me, I don’t have any relatives, but because I am a Muslim, my Muslim brothers welcomed me so I am staying with them. When I came here - I met them, praying together.” ADF, Kampala, M, 35

“I knew no one at all here. My first destination in Mbale was a church. There I met a widow that took an interest in me and took me to her place. I have lived with her until now.” LRA, Mbale, F, 41

Language

While family and friends in a new destination appeared to mitigate language barriers, some interviewees indicated that language, to a great extent, either facilitated or restricted their ability to migrate.

“I could speak some English and thought it would help me in Kampala.” LRA, Kampala, M, 29

“English is very important to getting a job and getting in touch with all types of people in Kampala.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 46

For some, the ability to speak Luganda also facilitated getting jobs.

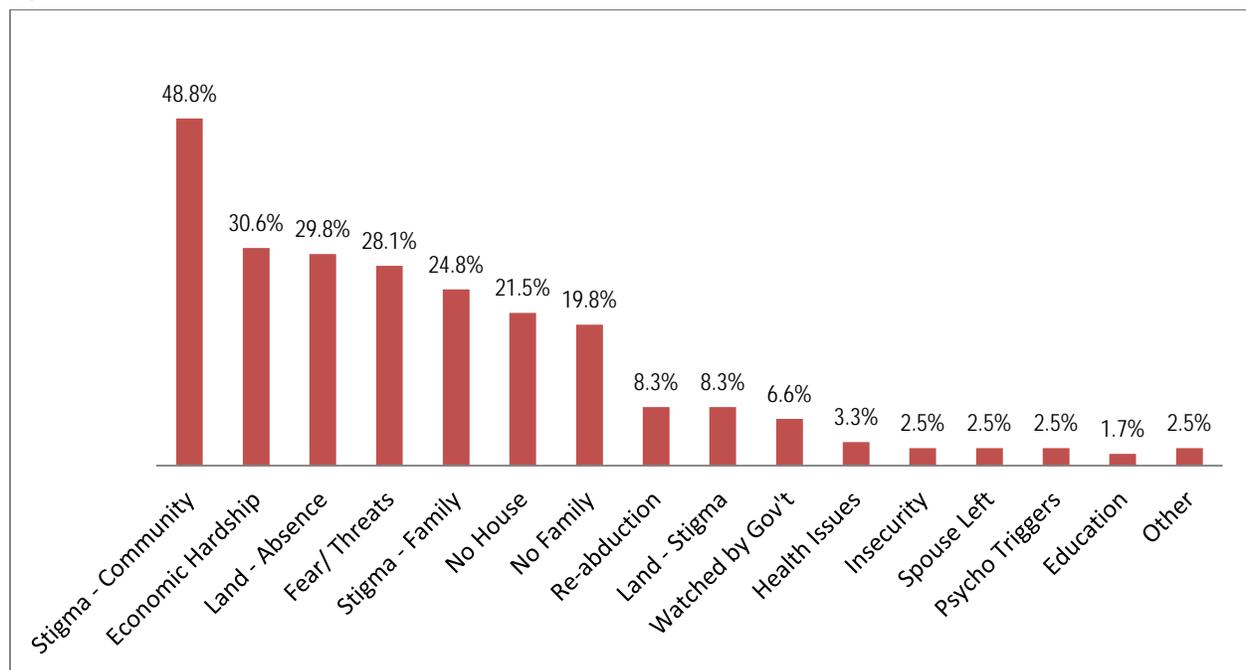
“I don’t speak English but now I can also speak Luganda in addition to Acholi -- so I can get by. I learned it in Kampala.” LRA, Kampala, F, 29

4.5c Push factors

Push factors are the dynamics driving an individual from their community. This is particularly important among ex-combatants as they frequently had many additional push factors than the average migrating Ugandan. Furthermore, combinations of push factors can prompt migration. In these cases the presence of one factor or another may not have led to migration, yet in conjunction the situation becomes unsustainable. Within the ex-combatant population it is also illuminating to understand some of the experiences they face but do not consider them a significant push factor but rather simply ignore or press on past them.

Of the 121 interviewees who migrated, just under 50% indicated having experienced stigmatization by their community and almost 30% feared for their safety due to threats or violence by the community. Meanwhile, just under 25% had experienced stigmatization by family members. Lack of land due to their extended absence was a factor for 30% of the sample, while less than 10% reported lack of land due to stigma or discrimination. Economic hardship was also experienced by just over 30%. Concerns over insecurity, a fear of the government, the loss of a spouse, psychological triggers, lack of educational opportunities or other services and others were experienced by a much smaller group. The figure below (Figure 13) shows the percentages of interviewees who indicated each factor as a contributing reason for leaving his/her community.

Figure 13 - PUSH Factors



Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Responses from interviews were categorized by whether the factor was a primary or secondary issue impacting on migration, or merely present in their lives. Though mentioned as factors in the decision-making process, interviewees gave no indication that education or psychological issues were the primary reasons for their migration.

PUSH FACTORS - Community of origin

While many common migration push factors emerged from the sample, several appeared to drive interviewees' decisions to leave their communities of origin. These factors combined to result in any eventual migration decision regardless of whether it was made over time or decided rapidly.

"There are mainly two pressing needs that forced me out of my town – to get money for my children, and there was stigmatization." ADF, Kampala, M, 48

"Others [who had been in the LRA] also had to leave their villages -- some had land problems, some [left] because of low income." LRA, Mbale, M, 62

"In 2009, I decided to leave and come to Kampala, because from [home] you cannot get anything to do or receive. The land there is squeezed. No one can give me land to cultivate." LRA, Kampala, M, 24

(i) Economic challenges

The primary push factor most prevalent in driving initial migration amongst interviewees was economic hardship and unemployment. Reporters were unable to cover the cost of basic needs for themselves and their children such as food, housing and school fees. There was significant convergence between ex-combatant and civilian non-combatant migration experiences in this way as sustainable livelihoods have been a challenge for Ugandans throughout the country:

"Because there is no work there [in Bombo], there is no way you can get any work -- the place is dry completely. It is just a problem for everyone." WNBF, Kampala, M, 48

"Everyone has the same problems. The main problem is finding a job -- not any other challenge than finding a job." WNBF, Kampala, M, 50

"You could not plant anything to make money in Koboko. There was no business or anything. It is not easy." LRA, Kampala, M, 29

However, reporters who have missed out on education, training, experience and job networks due to their time in the bush were found to be at a disadvantage in acquiring one of a very limited number of jobs available.

"There were about 23 who came back to Zombo on that day. The experience that we are facing is the same experience. Some of us left [Zombo] because there is no land. Others left because survival has become difficult. Our lives are so difficult -- we are resorting to burning charcoal trees, and doing some little businesses. Everyone thinks we are poor now. We want to know, 'why Amnesty Commission brought us back to suffer here?' It would have been better to remain in the Congo." WNBF, Arua, M, 40

Others moved because they felt they had become an economic burden on their household:

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"I decided to move because life was not easy at my brother's house. He had more children so there was a problem of food." LRA, Bungatira, M, 24

"I didn't have any income, was thinking of how to get any job for a long time. At that time my brother was helping me to stay, but the whole family was depending on him, and that is why I left them there [in Lugazi] and came here." WNBF, Kampala, M, 50

"My mother was happy I was back, but not everyone was happy about it. Some of my sisters were upset because of my health condition -- I was more of a burden -- didn't have any money, so a total burden." ADF, Kampala, F, 27

Several interviewees who had school-age children voiced a strong desire to secure additional income for covering the costs of their children's education and well-being:

"I had children who were not going to school, so in a way I couldn't stay there. When I came back, I found my children not going to school, not eating, no money for school fees. I tried to look for a job, but couldn't come across one. I tried to be self-employed but didn't have the capital. Because I wasn't working, I had to leave." ADF, Kampala, F, 35

"I came to Kampala because I saw that the children are getting bigger and their standard is coming ahead and in order to get some money to help them with schooling, and clothing and food. So that is why I came to look for another small, small job apart from digging." LRA, Kampala, M, 40

Additionally, some faced stigma in their communities, compounding the challenge inherent in obtaining employment. Many respondents were unable to find jobs due to stigma in their communities.

"People are rejected because of various factors -- if something happens wrong, they say it is you, 'those killers,' 'they invaded us' -- like me, I lost my marriage because I was a reporter, the rebellion is a stigma and still continues to hurt people. Many reporters don't qualify for jobs because they are reporters." LRA, Mbale, F, 40

"I used to wash clothes, but when I came back I couldn't do that anymore because no one would pay me to do this." ADF, Kampala, F, 38

"Life was just difficult. In the case of any work I had to pass through other people to get any work -- everyone thought I would steal or rob." LRA, Mbale, F, 54

Many attempted to farm or "dig" upon their return, but were unable to cover their financial needs.

"I just came back and was digging, but children were at the school and I couldn't cover their school fees. When I was a farmer before, I could make enough money -- but now, others took my land and my family is dead -- neighbors took most of the land. I am not feeling well because all the homes were destroyed. I am feeling very angry because I have children in school and no way to help them." WNBF, Arua, M, 55

"Getting money was difficult because crops take time to grow, but once they grew I could sell them. I used the seeds I got from Amnesty, but sometimes the weather wasn't favorable." LRA, Lukwor, M, 24

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Land tenure issues or reduced access to land also contributed to existing economic challenges.

“I was not having any job. I was still on my father’s land -- but even the land, it was little. I saw that I cannot manage. I said, ‘let me go look for a way I can get assistance.’ I saw that the land would not be enough.” LRA, Kampala, M, 42

Also, as discussed further in Section 4.6, some reporters have been forced to move to find jobs that would accommodate chronic injuries/disabilities that impacted their ability to do certain types of manual labor (farming, etc.).

(ii) Social exclusion, stigma and discrimination

For some reporters, stigma and discrimination is a significant factor impacting their migration. Many experienced extreme stigmatization from their family, community, or both, forcing them to leave for other destinations. At the same time, it was frequent for interviewees to state that they experienced stigma but did not consider it a primary factor in their decision to migrate. Many of the reporters who went to reception centers or through other such programs were given instruction on how to fit back into their communities, and how to cope with stigma if possible. These interviewees frequently mentioned that they had anticipated stigma and that it was either present to the degree they anticipated, or greater than expected to such a degree that they were forced to leave.

Based on the interviews, stigma was seen to vary greatly by:

- Rebel group (e.g. WNBF had little impact on the communities in Uganda and were primarily professional soldiers in the former regime, so they experienced fewer problems returning (this is consistent with the quantitative fieldwork undertaken by Dr. Anthony Finn during August-September 2011, which found that the WNBF reported experiencing no stigma), whereas ADF, LRA and UNRF II traumatized their respective areas of the country, making it more difficult for those communities to forgive. Some communities in the North have emphasized that the child associated with the rebel groups were largely abducted and, thus, cannot be blamed for atrocities committed, which has worked to varying degrees by community).
- How much their home community was affected by that group
- Male/female (e.g. men may be blamed more for direct violence to a community, but women often experience more general stigma that they are now “difficult women” regardless of actions)
- Method of joining, i.e. abducted vs. volunteered (e.g. LRA recruited many adults from the Mbale region and those individuals are experiencing high levels of stigma in their attempts to return home)
- Age when joined (e.g. those that were very young are often forgiven more easily, even if they “chose” to join)
- Level of awareness by the community that they joined a rebel group (e.g. many ADF women never told anyone where they went so were able to return without issue)

No return due to stigmatization

Many were diverted from ever attempting to return to their communities of origin due to known issues with stigmatization. Some interviewees had received word of acts of violence being committed towards others:

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"I skipped returning home because I had received word that the community did not want rebels there; somewhere in my district, people were butchered because they were former rebels, so that made it impossible in my mind to return." LRA, Mbale, F, 40

"My father had been executed by LRA in Kitgum. The family advised me it was not safe to return." LRA, Gulu, F, 28

While other reporters had received word of direct threats, which significantly impacted on their decision not to return home:

"My relatives informed me of threats on my life (poisoning plots), so I skipped going back home." LRA, Gulu, F, 23

"I never returned to Bududa because I had received word that community would force me out." FOBA, Mbale, M, 59

Still others had not necessarily received any advance notice of such threats, but assumed it would not be safe nonetheless:

"I had committed atrocities in my town. I could not go back." LRA, Kampala, M, 29

Stigmatization by family members

Overall, 15.7% of interviewees reported that stigmatization by their family was the primary cause of their migration away from their community of origin. Exclusion by ones family not only appeared to have social implications but also very tangible monetary and housing implications. Given that reporters often returned from the bush with nothing, they were frequently allowed to stay with family members either indefinitely or until they are able to provide for themselves. Land inheritance and access to land appeared largely to be tied to one's familial relations in Uganda. As a result, stigmatization by the whole family appeared to increase the likelihood of migration, as it often appeared to combine with many other factors.

Frequently, reporters were rejected immediately upon their return.

"When I got back to the village, all my parents were killed. So I went to my uncle -- he said I cannot live with him because I am a rebel and I might kill him, so he took me to the [local councilor]. Some time back, I called my elder uncle and he told me 'we don't want you, we have abandoned you, you are no longer our son.' I have never gone back for a visit -- because they don't want me and they don't want to see my face." LRA, Kampala, M, 29

Some interviewees who faced stigmatization were accepted at first, but stigma developed or was revealed over time.

"At first my family was happy, but then later it changed -- their mood changed as they heard about the atrocities that were committed there. My family was happy for 8 months -- thought Amnesty [Commission] would give them something, but then realized that they were not going to get any benefit. My parents turned against me -- they said to me they wanted me to leave." LRA, Mbale, F, 41

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"My parents were welcoming at first, and then eventually they started asking me questions, and then my parents started spreading rumors in the village. Eventually, my dad disowned me, and sold my plot of land and my house. My other brother who got the land thought I had come back to reclaim everything that was originally mine." ADF, Mutundwe (outside of Kampala), M, 41

"I was warmly welcomed by my family. Not all the time -- sometimes my dad would say bad words, and up to now I am not on good terms with my brothers. The brothers expected me to stay at my husband's place -- but I was chased from that place after the death of my husband." LRA, Mbale, F, 54

Some interviewees who faced stigmatization were accepted, but the family's fear of reprisal by the community, government, or rebel group led them to send the reporter away.

"My mother wasn't happy -- she was afraid she would be arrested because of me. My mother let me stay there, but at that time I didn't have a choice -- it was very hard to stay." ADF, Kampala, F, 38

Often women, but also men, were stigmatized because of the burden they placed on their families by leaving children to be looked after.

"There is still discrimination against my children up in Arua -- but it is stigma for economic reasons. They are being looked after but I wasn't helping out at all, so they are picked on because they are a burden." ADF, Kampala, F, 40

Stigmatization by the community

Apart from the family, 33.1% found stigma by the communities to be a primary push factor in their decision. This, as with the family problems, was often a combination of anger and fear toward the reporters.

"The community said I am useless and a killer. They said I was now the boss of myself and that I stole the cow that World Vision had given me." LRA, Pece (outside of Gulu), M, 31

"When I first came back, people thought there would be disturbance at the home, that it would bring soldiers to disturb them, just thought that. When people say, 'you are a rebel', it is really tough." WNBF, Arua, M, 38

In the early 2000s, the situation was also much more difficult when many reporters were initially returning. The devastation in many areas was ongoing, as were abduction and recruitment. Memories were fresh and there had been no time to heal.

"I also had bad memories at that place, the people there are not friendly to us -- they hate my family." FOBA, Mbale, M, 43

"They were calling me a guerilla -- just in that locality where I come from. And that even the children would call me this. I was the only one that had been part of the LRA who lived there." LRA, Mbale, F, 54

Some reporters were stigmatized due to ongoing violence in their region:

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

“The community was also not so receptive. After realizing that, I decided I needed to leave. I never expected them to harm me, but because of the prevailing conditions I was not happy and could not be there.” ADF, Kampala, F, 35

Some community members feared that, despite reporters demobilized status, they were continuing to aid the rebellion:

“The people [in my community] were not happy because they thought I might still be linking with those in the bush. There were four of us that returned together and the people feared all of us.” LRA, Kampala, F, 29

In some cases, interviewees reported stigmatization potentially fueled by government authorities:

“When I came home, I faced difficulties. The government was operating in those areas and telling people in Yumbe that any people from the bush were not good and to not mix with them. Some people were telling me I should not be there and that I would only bring problems, so because of that, life became very, very difficult.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 35

“I tried to go back to the village but during the time I was at army detention centers, they would take me home and show me around and say I was a very bad man. The community was welcoming, but then people feared associating with me because of the authorities. I decided I could not cope and would instead come to Kampala to stay with my sister.” ADF, Kampala, M, 36

Stigmatization has often emerged when problems arise. Frequently, community members use reporters' rebel status against them to win arguments and disputes or assign blame:

“At that time the pressure on ex-combatants was very bad here -- if anything happened they would blame ex-combatants. It was harder for me because I was a commander. My people were suffering, and Arua was the battle field.” WNBF, Arua, M, 69

Particularly in regions with less abduction and more volunteerism, the communities were wary that the reporters might have returned to recruit more rebels rather than to permanently reintegrate.

“Not everyone received me [in Busia], my brother received me, but people were hostile -- they thought I was back to recruit others and take them back to the bush, and this was definitely a reason why I decided to come to Mbale. The people I found in Busia, they would not mingle up with me because of the activities they knew we had done in the community. And they harassed me” FOBA, Mbale, M, 45

Given the complex political situation in the latter half of the 20th century in Uganda, many had very different political positions well before they joined a rebel group and these dynamics often remained upon their return.

“My father was an advisor of former government -- he was an elder [in Hoima], was an advisor to the local community -- and they termed him as one of Amin's henchmen, and they killed him. So I decided to come to where my mother is from (Arua), not back to Hoima.” WNBF, Arua, M, 51

Reporters often experienced additional stigma if they did not re-assimilate quickly into the community. Several reporters were told that the community felt they now acted differently.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"When I returned, people all thought I was talking rudely -- talked differently than others. I thought I would leave until those things settled down and then go back." LRA, Lolojo (outside of Kitgum), F, 32

Sometimes, as with the family, the stigma would grow over time.

"When I came back from ADF, I was a religious teacher and was mentoring the kids before they are taken to school. I stayed for six years, but people starting passing rumors, so I felt uncomfortable and would only go out in the night. The community was saying that I was teaching the children to be rebels -- so I ran away." ADF, Mutundwe (outside of Kampala), M, 41

"Initially I was welcomed because they thought I was coming with money, but then they started to remember all the bad things the LRA did in the community." LRA, Mbale, M, 37

Several cases also emerged in which the community had been angry because the reporter had returned alone without the others who had been abducted from the community.

"I was abducted with 80 others. Of the 80, I was the only one to return. If others saw me, they would be unhappy because none of the others returned. I had to hide" LRA, Pece (outside of Gulu), F, 28

"Neighbors did not like the fact that I came back and their sons did not. In areas, when you are captured, when the boss keeps passing by and saying that that person will go out and bring back more. The community remembered this and they looked at it always like this." LRA, Kampala, M, 37

Many experienced non-verbal stigma, which often weighed heavily on reporters over time. Several of the reception centers gave the reporters guidance on how to react to stigma:

"The rest of the community was also happy. Except some, especially when they get drunk with alcohol, can talk. Others were backsliding me, but not very often. I was sorry -- I was feeling sorry for that because I have not decided to do those things, I was just forced." LRA, Kampala, M, 23

Stigma-related fear

Of those interviewed, 27.5% reported that they feared for their personal safety after returning home, and 17.5% indicated this as a primary factor for migrating elsewhere.

"I feared the community so I decided to leave. The other ones also left." LRA, Kampala, F, 29

Several reporters revealed living in secrecy regarding their former status as a rebel for fear of retribution.

"I was just afraid of the others and what they would do when they heard I was a rebel." LRA, Mbale, F, 41

Some interviewees reported fearing for their safety to the extent that they would hide during the day before ultimately deciding to flee their community:

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"The neighbors were not happy because for them they believe that everyone from the bush has killed and every family has lost at least one person, so whoever comes from the bush they think that that might be the one who killed their family member. So you can't work during the day time, some may just attack you. It did not happen to me because I did not show my face in the day time." LRA, Kampala, M, 24

"I was afraid if they get me they could torture me, but now there is nothing, because I have that card -- if there is anything I just show them the Amnesty card." WNBF, Kampala, M, 42

"Life became difficult because in the community you are not taken as a normal person. People look at you as a bad person. They told me if I showed myself outside then they would kill me. That is why I came to Kampala." LRA, Kampala, M, 37

Stigma-related threats to personal safety

Fear felt by reporters was not unfounded, but based in real accounts of violent acts and threats of violence towards themselves and others. When stigmatization escalated, many reporters became the targets of violence from other community members or received threats that caused them to relocate.

"I was scared of the people in the community threatening me -- there were many threats and this was the only reason I left. They thought I came back to spy on them." ADF, Kampala, M, 35

"My mother welcomed me with open arms, but the other relatives and community did not treat me well. They told me to go back to the bush to those people. The village had not been affected by the fighting, but still they threatened to hurt me. There were many threats -- that is why I decided to leave; I returned with three other [reporters]. They all had similar experiences with discrimination. They all left, they came to Kampala." ADF, Kampala, F, 30

"My neighbors were not happy with me. I was the man who recruited their children. I received threats because of this." ADF, Kampala, M, 42

Interviewees also reported threats and violence directed toward family members by community members which caused them to leave:

"I feared for my personal safety after my child was poisoned." LRA, Gulu, F, 28

"My uncle was beaten because he was related to me." ADF, Kampala, M, 47

"There was one incident when groups came at night and started to torture people from UNRF II in the community in general. They killed one of my brothers. After that, I decided to leave. Now there is only one person in my family who has not left Yumbe." WNBF, Arua, M, 56

Several reporters experienced damage and destruction to property, which compounded concerns:

"Because I went in the bush, the villagers and neighbors wanted to kill me and they destroyed the house. They did not want me there." ADF, Butambala (outside of Kampala), M, 56

Stigma was not a migration factor for all

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

While it is clear that, for many, stigma was a defining factor of their return, it is critical for understanding the migration picture that there were also many interviewees who were completely accepted back by their family and community and did not report experiencing any stigma.

"They made us work on our people badly, so I feared our people. When I went back, that was the time I believed for myself it was ok -- they told me no problem, you are free, it was not your fault." LRA, Kampala, M, 43

"My mother and father gave me advice to stay at home and not remember the past so I remained and am living with them now." LRA, Bwongatira (outside of Gulu), M, 25

While not directly affected by stigmatization themselves, some interviewees acknowledged that issues related to stigma for reporters were present:

"I had no fear of anyone, I did not fear for my life. Some did have that fear and talked about how a good number had been killed. We did not have equal experiences. The majority were fine." WNBF, Kampala, M, 62

The least amount of stigma reported appeared to come from those communities which had experienced high rates of abduction, those that had focused on peace and reconciliation dialogue, and those where the rebellion had had little impact on the people in that community.

"The LRA took me far away, up to Sudan. I didn't disturb [my people], I was in another district, so I didn't have a problem with them. I had to talk open with them to tell the truth, the moment you talk to them and say the right thing, you can stay with them. You talk to them openly, the way to stay in the bush is bad, so they know you do not have a bad heart. I was trying to counsel them to tell them that we suffered in the bush. I tried to discourage them who wanted to join, to tell them that life in the bush is not easy -- cannot have enough food, or enough rest. So it was very happy for me that I could teach them." LRA, Kampala, M, 42

"People were very happy -- people were coming from different places for one month to see me. Everyone was happy. They also did prayers -- a big one by the retired Bishop -- called everyone together to pray for about 80 people who had returned." LRA, Lukwor (outside of Kitgum), M, 24

"Yes, the community knew -- but they also knew we were free people and freely surrendered. People were happy. Especially my sisters." FOBA, Mbale, M, 43

Additionally, a large number of reporters experienced stigmatization but stayed regardless.

"It was not easy to stay at home. People were pointing and saying I was a killer. This still happens now. If there is a need to leave it would be because of the high cost of rent. But I want to stay here. I am working hard to get land, but right now my problems are financial. I must work hard as a farmer to pay school fees for his children." LRA, Onyama (outside of Gulu), M, 31

"I will keep staying here. When I went back home some members of the community would abuse my children -- using language to say they were devils from the LRA. Some people have a bad response to me but that is my home and I will stay." LRA, Paico (outside of Gulu), F, 25



Street vendors on a Saturday in Gulu

(iii) Violence and fear

War-related violence/insecurity

During what is commonly referred to as the “emergency phase” in Uganda, which roughly lasted from 2003-2008, over one million Ugandans were displaced due to fierce fighting between government forces and rebel fighters in the North and in other parts of the country. In most cases, the IDPs were forced to flee rural areas for the relative security of nearby camps and town centers. This period also coincided with the years following the signing of the Amnesty Act in 2000, which saw the demobilization and reintegration of tens of thousands of ex-combatants back into communities.

Regarding his initial reintegration experience, one reporter stated:

"I was very afraid that the rebels would come get me, but then everyone moved to the IDP camps and there were soldiers there and it was very hard for [the rebels] to get in." LRA, Lukwor (outside of Kitgum), M, 24

The camps proved to make far from ideal residences for most Ugandans, especially in the area of education. Many interviewees reported frustrations with the level of education and opportunities offered in the camps during the formative years of both former rebels and non-combatants, but the challenges faced in this area seem to have been especially difficult for those returning from the bush.

"I just needed to continue with studies. I was going to school at the camp but it wasn't a good school at the camp. The feeling I have now is that there are some people that hadn't done so well in studies [before I left], but now they have gone ahead and passed me." LRA, Kitgum, M, 20

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Fear of re-abduction or death if found by rebel group

Another factor that was found to be very influential in interviewees' movement, particularly during the more violent and active years of fighting, was a very real fear of re-abduction and specifically of being hunted down by their rebel group for desertion. Smaller communities were less able to protect themselves against the groups as rebels marauded through, so many, including reporters, would move to IDP camps or the cities with a strong army presence for safety. Particularly in the early years of the Amnesty Act, this created a challenge for many reporters who were unconvinced they would truly be released if they reported. However, they needed to move closer to the army for protection so they were hiding from both armed groups. Many initially hid inside their houses until they made the decision to report. This suggested that there were many others that never decided to report who would have lost additional time in hiding which further delayed their social and economic reintegration.

"I feared that the LRA would come back for me up there, that's why I decided to come to Kampala." LRA, Kampala, M, 33

"I was just fearing that in case they get you again then of course they would just kill you because you escaped. I mostly was just not moving -- I would stay close to home, because I was having the fear." LRA, Kampala, M, 45

"I wasn't expecting them, but as the LRA came closer I became more afraid. I used to go stay in the churches -- especially at night. I would leave the older children at home and take the younger children." LRA, Mbale, F, 41

Some women reported fear of death from rebel husbands for escaping:

"My husband was an LRA commander. He was hunting me down to kill me." LRA, Gulu, F, 28

As with stigma, others experienced similar fears but did not migrate either because they were still drawn to stay or because they had no opportunity to leave.

Fear of government reprisal

There was still severe tension involving arrests by government forces of individuals associated with rebel groups into the mid-2000s, some reportedly continuing at present. For some this has made the "fear of being watched by government" less theoretical and more of a tangible concern.

"I had that fear that the government would have that wrong concept about me and they would get me. I did not fear others in the LRA or being re-abducted." LRA, Kampala, M, 37

"I fear the government, so that is reason why I wanted to leave the country. I am open about my past, but they treat me differently because of it -- whenever there are problems, they think that these are the people, perpetrators of these problems. I feel so insecure because when we were coming from the bush there were some friends of mine who were killed, so they blame me -- they think that the people that were killed were killed by people like me. This is still my main concern, and I still want to leave the country. " ADF, Kampala, M, 35

"I was afraid the government would arrest me and take me to Luzira prison. If you were in the town they would pick you up and take you to prison." WNBF, Arua, M, 49

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

This fear caused many to look for larger cities where they could be anonymous, or to move out of the country entirely.

"I feared for my life [that government wanted to kill me]. I fled to Kenya for some time." ADF, Kampala, M, 35

"[Government forces] came in the night and took us to Luwero to get us to join UPDF. After that, relatives decided to send me to Kampala." ADF, Kampala, F, 28

"I knew people were following me, but I could disappear in Kampala and I would be protected. I didn't have my passport so I could not leave. Here [in Kampala], the government does not have a problem with us." WNBF, Kampala, M, 35

(iv) Land tenure issues

Land and economic concerns are intrinsically interrelated and both are prominent issues for Ugandans overall. However, due to reporters' extended absence and stigma, land issues appear to have been exacerbated for interviewees. Land was often sold off or redistributed in their long absence due to family members' assumption of death. In some cases, land was grabbed as a direct result of stigma for joining the rebellion, and still in other cases, the absence of the reporter presented an opportunity for neighbors to obtain additional land amidst a growing scarcity. Due to the violence and insecurity, documentation of land rights was often lost during this time since it was frequently left in a house that was then destroyed.

Another reality during this time was the displacement of entire communities for several years to IDP camps. Upon the return of IDPs to their communities, they would often find that others had taken their land, the elders had passed away and there was no authority on the matter, or that the community demographics had changed during the time in the camp so that the original distribution no longer met the needs of those returning. Also important to note in this context is that land rights are largely patriarchal in most of Uganda and unmarried women have no claim to land.

Regarding land issues, it is unclear if land scarcity has driven families and communities to use former rebel status as an excuse not to share land upon a reporter's return, or if the stigma from involvement with rebel groups alone caused the issues that reporters have experienced. Our research suggests, however, that these are compounding factors.

"Those who came back to this region and they are from this region have a very big problem with land. After they returned people started calling them killers and rebels -- had to step in and tell the AC, government had to intervene. It is still not totally solved. Our biggest problem here is the land problem." WNBF, Arua, M, 51

"The land was communal land and it was very difficult for my cousins to allow me a portion." UNRF II, Arua, M, 43

"The issue of land did cut across everyone, but for some it was the other way around, some ex-combatants were leaders of those homes, so the issues of land didn't apply, they were kings who had come back. These people were heroes, not stigmatized because they held such a high position and their package was so rich." ibid

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Land issues resulting from stigma

Throughout the interviews, several reporters shared accounts of dealing with land issues fueled by stigmatization (or the use of stigmatization to mask some other underlying motive) by relatives and members of the community.

Many male interviewees reported encountering issues with brothers with whom they shared communal plots of land:

"All of my belongings were demolished by my brothers. And my brothers took my land and sold it. I now prefer to be in Mbale because of the conflicts with my brothers in the village. The conflict with them is about land." LRA, Mbale, M, 39

"My family welcomed me, but my brothers did not want to give the land back to me." LRA, Kampala, M, 37

Some interviewees reported difficulties with other family members:

"I have no land in Luwero -- the land that was there, my father's relatives took it away because they didn't like what I did." ADF, Luwero/ Mukono, F, 39

Others cited stigmatization from neighbors as the primary reason for being driven from their land:

"We have land in Yumbe, but I cannot use the land because they saw me as the enemy. They still do. Neighbors lost relatives to us, so they cannot forgive us." WNBF, Kampala, M, 35

"I stayed one year freely, then in the second year, my elder brother died and the neighbors started quarreling with me. If I was digging, the neighbors would come to disturb me, they wouldn't disturb my brothers. They would do this just because I was a rebel. People in the community sent a policeman to arrest me. The policemen said I had to pay 200,000sh and they would go away -- so my brother sold a cow and they released me. But after that I decided to go away." WNBF, Arua, M, 38

"My community in the village was not happy. They said we were the ones who killed their people and they wanted our land. The clan leaders and [local councilors] were trying to assist me with this because they knew me, but it was still very difficult." LRA, Kampala, M, 33

Still others asserted their land issues were tied to stigmatization by community leaders and officials:

"The reason I do not have land is the ADF. The elders in the community were telling my father 'this boy is not good in this community of ours.' I am the elder son but this land it is my father's and now it is not for me." ADF, Kampala, M, 35

"The problem was when I moved back to my village they hated me so much. I was just there digging, I had a small land. They did not want me there because I was a rebel. I had land but some was grabbed by my family, they hated me. The government came and told them to do it. They thought I was already dead so my brothers sold it." ADF, Kampala, M, 48

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

While land wrangles have been typically left to local and traditional authorities to sort out, reporters' protected status under the law (with regards to discrimination) gives the Amnesty Commission authority to intervene in land cases which stem from stigmatization.

"Mostly the Amnesty Commission lobbies for us -- they are like our lawyers -- if we have a problem with land, when it is left to us, then we cannot do anything, but Amnesty can step in and reason for us and speak for us -- it works like a bridge to link the issues." WNBF, Arua, M, 51

Land issues resulting from absence

Due to high population growth rates and other factors, land has become increasingly scarce in Uganda, which has fueled land grabs across the country in recent years. Interviews indicated that reporters' long absences away from land while fighting made them an easy target for land grabs:

"Land grabs are affecting everyone. When people leave for any reason, people will grab their land. The populations are increasing but the land remains limited." WNBF, Arua, M, 40

"I never returned to Bududa because I received word that my land had been grabbed while gone." FOBA, Mbale, M, 59

Family members were reportedly also responsible for the sale or redistribution amongst the clan of a reporters' land over the course of the individual's extended absence, largely due to the family having moved on after assuming that absence was related to the death of the individual:

"My land had been sold because they thought I was dead." ADF, Kampala, M, 39

"By that time, I did not have a permanent place to resettle. The land that was customary land was being occupied and didn't have any space for me." LRA, Kampala, M, 37

Many non-combatants returning from IDP camps had similar problems due to their extended absence:

"The bad thing was that I found that the land of our father had been taken away. When my family came back from the camp in 2007, the land was gone. They said our family could just have this small piece of land -- the rest had been taken. My father said that now everyone has to look for his own way, because he cannot accumulate all of you here. I tried to talk to the local counselor, and they were no help -- they said the elders know where the boundary is and if they say that is the boundary that is it. They said we would have to go court. It is in the court now." LRA, Kampala, M, 23

Land issues due to gender

"After my parents died, the neighbors tried to take our land, but now my brothers have taken it and I have no access." LRA, Lamola, F, 32

(v) Loss of house, material possessions, and family/social structure

Loss of primary housing

Apart from land, many reporters also cited the lack of a physical structure in which to live as a factor pushing them to leave. Many houses were destroyed as a result of the fighting -- some rebel houses

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

were targeted by the government or the community while others were destroyed in a land grab as the presence of a structure on land in many areas determines ownership.

"My house was destroyed; the buildings were the only proof I owned the land." UNRF I & II, Arua, M, 60

"It was not safe in Koboko -- they burned everything, all the house is all gone." WNBF, Kampala, M, 45

"If I had accommodation and my land to cultivate I would have stayed." WNBF, Arua, M, 40

Individuals often were able to stay with family or friends initially upon their return but those approaching adulthood needed to leave that situation and get a house of their own to accommodate their family.

"There is no problem in the community or in my village either. But I had no place to stay and I am a parent now, so there is no way to keep myself there." LRA, Mbale, M, 39

"I sat my father and brothers down and told them [I was moving away] -- they said there is no way we can stop you. My father thought it was a bad idea, he wanted me to stay, but since there was no place for me to stay he had to agree." LRA, Kampala, M, 23

Loss of all material positions

In addition to the loss of one's house, reporters often had to start over with nothing. It was for this purpose that those in Uganda received a reinsertion package including a mattress, and some household basics such as a pot, a jerry can and some seeds for planting.

"Life is so much more difficult for me because everything of mine was finished, they took it. I'm starting from scratch and I am old." ADF, Kampala, M, 44

"When we came back, all the houses were burned, animals we had -- all taken away by the rebels -- the whole community was affected. I feel my problems are the same as everyone else's who were not in the rebel group for the most part, but my house was destroyed and my family was displaced. I have nothing because I was a rebel. I do feel different. I was the same as everyone before. But now I am different. Those others are good now, I am not." WNBF, Kampala, M, 62

Decimation of family/social network

Violence, poverty and illness were all constant realities in many of these communities, with interviewees frequently returning to their community of origin to find family members deceased. In some cases the reporters were aware of this, whereas often they learned this news upon their return. Family networks are very important in Uganda and the lack of a family to return to often had a very large impact on an ex-combatant's decision to return or migrate.

"My family was displaced, there was no one left in Arua." WNBF, Kampala, M, 62

"My parents could provide some help, but then my mother died in 2005, and my father died in 2009, so I could not sustain and couldn't stay in that house." LRA, Mbale, F, 54

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Extended family networks are also strong in Uganda and many were able to connect with their family in that way, but often ended up migrating regardless.

“My father died when I was young and my mother died of disease while I was gone. I lived with my older brother when I returned.” LRA, Bungatira (outside of Gulu), M, 24

“I knew there was no one there that could take me. I am a total orphan because my parents died while I was gone. My brother and sister were still in the village so I stayed with my brother. But I had no one to provide for me, so I had to leave. My brother had a big family so he could not support me.” LRA, Mbale, M, 42

In addition, stigmatization appeared to be fueled by resource limitations causing many to not be accepted by their extended family members.

“My parents died when I was in the bush -- I just found out when I returned. At first, I stayed home with family but the reception was very poor because the house that my then husband had built, they had sold, so they knew that by my coming back I would try to get it back. And I did, but failed. I tried to go to my uncle’s place, but he would not allow me there -- they knew I would bring trouble about the house -- that I had been in ADF contributed to that. Even to today they don’t want to associate with me, only the brother who is sick will still talk to me.” ADF, Kampala, F, 35

Many interviewees even reported not returning at all because they had no family left in their hometown (WNBF, Kampala, M, 28; WNBF, Kampala, M, 46; WNBF, Kampala, M, 52).

Wife left or remarried

Some interviewees reported leaving their community of origin upon discovering that their spouse had left them and/or moved away without them. This phenomenon seemed most common in areas where reporters had several wives. Male interviewees referred to this as “wife grabbing.”

“I had three wives when I went to the bush, but when I came back they had gone. I went to Yumbe, but they said you are a bad man from the bush, started talking bad language to me and told me I should leave the area. My wives had nothing to eat, so they left me with 12 children.” WNBF, Arua, M, 56

(vi) Psychological challenges

A few interviewees reported that ongoing memory associations or triggers in their communities were a factor in their migration. None of the reporters believed this to be a primary push factor, but it was present amongst the sample and factored into some reporters’ desire to leave their community.

“I have the dreams, the nightmares. My relatives died there, so there are bad memories with that place.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 57

“Bad memories disturbed me for some months, and this is a reason I refused to stay that side. Because if I could observe the environment, I still see the same area where I had been operating.” LRA, Kampala, M, 43

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

(vii) Lack of health services

Many interviewees reported returning from war with injuries such as bullet wounds and bomb splinters. Others developed illnesses such as AIDS or other health complications that could not be treated in their communities. This was not a frequent finding amongst the sample, but an important factor for those reporters who dealt with such physical issues.

"I am a diabetic so I come to Arua for treatment in several month blocks." WNBF, Koboko/ Arua, M, 56

"I was abducted with several others -- the others are all dead, and even me I am now dead -- I have AIDS." WNBF, Arua, M, 44

(viii) IDP camps

Ugandan IDP camps were operating for decades, and many interviewees, especially in the North, reported returning to camps immediately following their return from rebel groups. The camps presented several difficult challenges for IDPs (including ex-combatants) such as poor education, public health issues, and lack of opportunities, forcing many to move to other locations even before the camps had closed. When the camps did close, ex-combatants with few other options were forced to decide where to go -- often following either immediate or extended family members to ancestral land which commonly involved issues over land tenure upon their return.

PUSH FACTORS - Other (non-origin) community

While most interviewees reported having migrated only once (to their present location), a few reporters indicated having moved multiple times. While push factors largely remained consistent irrespective of number of moves, there appeared to be a few push factors specific to multiple-destination migration among the sample.

(i) "Not my home"

For the same reason as many initially reported wanting to return home, many interviewees reported feeling disconnected and out of place in their new cities. They felt lonely there and wished to return to their community of origin.

(ii) Urban cost of living

Urban centers are usually more expensive and while a primary draw is economic, the reality is that the high cost of living often makes it impossible to sustain daily living. It can also be very difficult to find a job in Kampala and even those who are successful often end up working unpredictable day labor. Many are unable to cover rent or other basic necessities as cost of living exceeds income.

"I stayed in Kampala for two years; I left because life was too difficult and rent was too high."
ADF, Masaka, M, 30

(iii) End of employment or additional support

Many interviewees were able to live in Kampala after finding work or by depending on relatives or friends. These situations were often fragile and any change quickly meant that living there became

unsustainable. Additionally, many groups providing training or education were a draw to cities, but when that assistance ended it became untenable to remain.

“When I first got here, I stayed with my friend for two years. He was a lorry driver. I told the lorry driver I was in ADF, and he was so understanding at first, but then other people came and twisted the story.” (As a result this man lost his job and his housing) ADF, Mutundwe (outside of Kampala), M, 41

“In Kampala I was going to my husband’s family. His mother welcomed me -- stayed there for around two months. The old woman was welcoming, but the other relatives were not. I went to the in-laws house but they chased me away because I had left with the husband, but the husband didn’t make it back, they felt I could have seduced him to take part in that undertaking that took his life.” ADF, Kampala, F, 35

“When I came here I found a colleague that I fought with in ADF, so when I came, that colleague and wife accommodated me for five months. But then I had to find my own place.” ADF, Kampala, M, 35

(iv) Extreme stigmatization

While many reporters interviewed found that their new communities had less stigma, often the case was that the individual simply had not been open about their past and, when discovered, extreme stigma was experienced. Some female reporters stated that their husbands had left them after discovering their past.

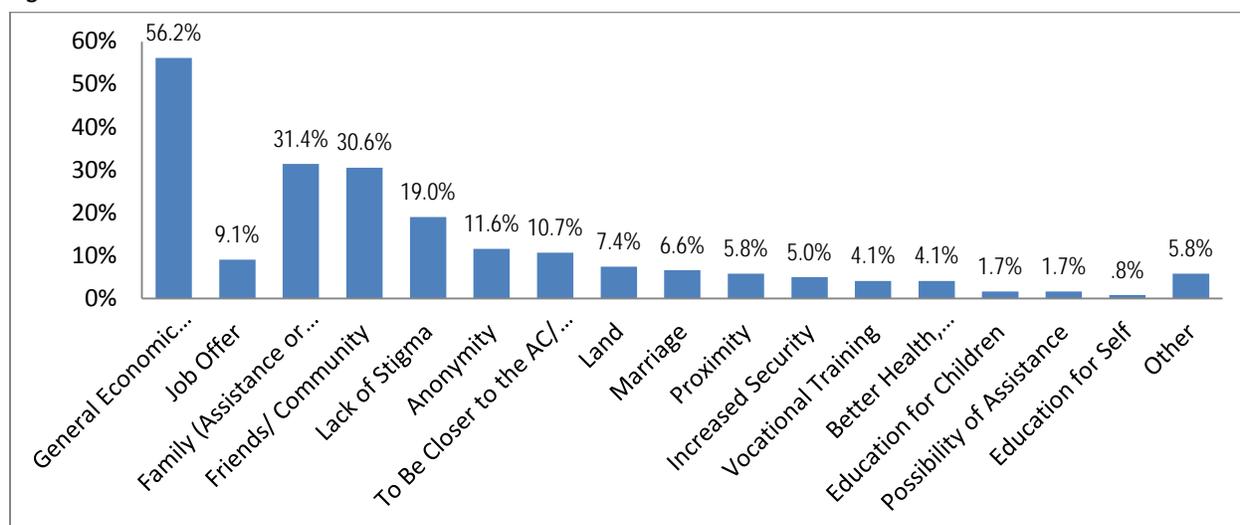
“A few people knew I had been in ADF -- I found it a problem because people would look at me suspiciously like I was a problem person.” ADF, Kampala, F, 35

4.5d Pull factors

As previously discussed, pull factors are defined by Lee as “the aspects that attract one to another area” (Lee, 1966). Again, as with push factors, we observed a large degree of convergence between the migration literature and the ex-combatant migration experiences amongst the sample. Yet, several factors specific to ex-combatant status did emerge from the research, such as lack of stigma and the draw of the Amnesty Commission for assistance, which we also explored in the interviews. Generally, interviewee migration was found to be motivated by not one, but multiple combined factors, though often driven by a single overarching primary push or pull factor such as extreme stigmatization, property loss, or a job offer.

General economic opportunities were a pull factor for 56.2% of the migrants interviewed. It was by far the most common pull factor found. Additionally, 9.1% had a specific job offer that pulled them to a particular city, which is also economic in nature. The next most common pull factors were family and friends that could provide assistance, housing or advice. Many moved to larger communities due to the heightened anonymity and the lack of stigma they hoped to find there. The figure below (Figure 14) shows the percentages of interviewees who indicated each factor as a contributing reason they were drawn to his/her new community.

Figure 14 - PULL Factors



Quantitative fieldwork undertaken by Dr. Anthony Finn during Aug-Sep 2011 found that pull factors for reporters were primarily family and friends, housing, and economic opportunities. Those findings are largely consistent with the findings of this study (see figure 15), especially given that family, friends, housing and economic opportunities were found to be largely intertwined (as discussed later in this section). While most moved to a more urban location due to pull factors such as economics, anonymity and lack of stigma, several were drawn not to an urban center, but to other villages by availability of land or to live with family. As with push factors, a differentiation must be made between what pulled individuals to other communities versus what pulled them home.

PULL FACTORS - Other Communities

As the literature and data both indicate, decisions are almost always a result of a combination of factors. Reporters discussed the interplay of various pull factors on their decision to migrate:

“The decision to shift to Kampala depended on many things -- work, cost of living. There were no relatives or friends in Kampala, but I thought I would not struggle to get a job. The conditions of living in Arua [made it] difficult to go back to Arua. I...was afraid the people would hate me and want me to leave and my life would be in danger. In Kampala no one cares and you are free -- that is what I had heard.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 28

“I just came direct to Kampala. I came to Kampala because I don’t have the land and the money, so I came here to make some business. I decided to come here because I had heard there are many jobs. I also have friends that I stay with. Staying here in Kampala is better because I am closer to any assistance AC can give me.” LRA, Kampala, F, 25

(i) Perception/expectation of economic opportunities

Like many people in East Africa and across the globe, cultivating sustainable livelihoods continues to persist as a major challenge. A significant portion of the general population in Uganda moves frequently for economic opportunity -- some to border towns, others to Nairobi and Southern Sudan -- but most travel directly to the capital and largest urban area in the country, Kampala. They come to Kampala due to the relatively high number of potential opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labor.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"So many go to Kampala -- they go look for a living." WNBF, Arua, M, 69

"I went there [to Kampala] because my people were suffering at home and I was not getting money." WNBF, Arua, M, 44

"I did not return home -- I thought it best to go directly to Kampala for jobs." ADF, Kampala, M, 35

Kampala

Kampala has been an incredibly popular destination for a variety of reasons, but primarily due to the economic possibilities there. Many have found it to be much easier to find work in Kampala than in other places:

"I was told there'd be more opportunities in Kampala." ADF, Kampala, F, 40

"I picked Kampala because there are better chances of getting a job here." ADF, Kampala, F, 35

"Some others went back to school, but for me I was old enough, so I came to Kampala looking for my own work." LRA, Kampala, M, 43

"I was looking to stay in a good place in which I can work and get money. I stay in Kampala because in our place there is no work, we just come here because we can get work. I left Arua because there is no job, but if you come here to Kampala you get a job because there are many." WNBF, Kampala, M, 42

Most went to Kampala looking for any job. While some were able to find jobs in their area of experience, the combination of factors resulted in most working in manual daily labor -- as a porter, in construction, digging, or other informal and sporadic work.

"For money I just did some porter work, or help with builders." FOBA, Mbale, M, 43

"You can load a vehicle here. This pays the rent. It is not always enough to send back to my wife and children." WNBF, Kampala, M, 58

"I came to look for assistance, I didn't expect to find a job but hoped I would. Loading -- people from Sudan, helping them -- getting work." WNBF, Kampala, M, 48

Some were encouraged to go to Kampala because they spoke English and felt they could have an opportunity to work and have access to better jobs because of their language skills.

"I thought I could be most competitive in Kampala for jobs because I knew English. They say in Kampala you can get some people who know English properly, you can use the language and it is easier to find work, so you can get something little. Most of us knew English, some know a little, some know more. Many remained in my village because they do not know English." LRA, Kampala, M, 24

"Most of the others in our group decided to go and dig because of language -- they did not have English or Luganda skills. Language is a problem, so they can only dig. My parents did not know

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

English, but it was important to them that I learn, so they sent me to school and followed up." WNBF, Kampala, M, 53

Even in Kampala, however, livable wages and job security have remained scarce, and have appeared to be declining in recent years.

"I chose Kampala because the chances of getting employment are higher, it is easier to secure employment, unlike other areas. But I couldn't find work." ADF, Kampala, F, 30

"I thought there would be jobs - but there is no work. Sometimes I would get jobs in construction. I currently have no job." LRA, Mbale, M, 39

"I expected my situation would improve by moving to Kampala. In reality I didn't find jobs -- I would have had to have startup capital." ADF, Kampala, F, 35

Some interviewees added that they do not have the skills or qualifications to secure long-term employment in Kampala.

"Getting even food is a problem. I'm not working, I gamble around, get food from neighbors. I have just finished the course of tailoring a couple months ago and am too new for anyone to give me a job and I don't have capital to start my own business." FOBA, Mbale, M, 59

"Actually I have been moving around and trying to get friends to connect me with other jobs around -- maybe selling papers etc. -- but the qualifications are the problems, they ask for a diploma but I don't have that." FOBA, Mbale, M, 43

Other District Capitals

Other popular destinations for economic reasons were the local district capitals. These also had a higher chance of finding employment although many were unsuccessful and eventually continued to move to Kampala.

"Here in Arua, you get 4,000 a day to dig, in Maracha, 1,500 for the day." WNBF, Arua, M, 55

"I wanted my own home and a job. I was born near Mbale -- so being a local person I thought it could be easier to find a job here." LRA, Mbale, M, 62

"Mbale has some jobs, so it's better. There are not enough jobs in my village. Others who were in the LRA are also here. They have the same problems. For money some do some machine work or construction." LRA, Mbale, M, 42

"I chose [Kitgum] because I could do my tailoring here." LRA, Lolojo, F, 32

Some preferred these options to Kampala due to the relatively low economic cost.

"Instead of going to Kampala, which is very expensive and I cannot manage, I decided to come to Arua." WNBF, Arua, M, 51

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Foreign Destinations

Many have migrated outside of the country in search of economic opportunities.

"I considered Nairobi, I went there in 2003, but I did not find work. And I went again. I stayed for two weeks and came back. I had no friends or family. I went for business with a friend. We had heard there might be an opportunity, but it was not good. 2008, I went to Iraq for one year. I went as a guard." WNBF, Kampala, M, 44

Access to land is also an economic opportunity and the two factors are intertwined in many cases.

(ii) Firm job offers

An unexpectedly large percentage (9.1%) of reporters was pulled to their destination by a pre-agreed job offer. The large majority of these offers were from security firms that had recruited those with military or weapons experience. According to one reporter, the requirements for being recruited included, "Amnesty Certificate, an LC1 letter, passport sized photo, three reference letters, and results receipt [from Senior 4 education level], and you also have to speak English. They ask you if you have any experience concerning something with force."

"In fact when I was in Gulu, I heard I could get a simple job to help me keep up my life, so I joined this private security." LRA, Kampala, M, 52

"My friend called me and said if you want a job come this way, there are jobs for security. I said it is possible if we agree it is good on me." LRA, Kampala, M, 42

Some were also assisted by the government -- either by the army at the time of demobilization, or by other government entities -- to obtain such jobs.

"Being a man, I work with a security organization, and I am a CFP as well. That is the work I am doing. I got the advice from Amnesty Commission. I wanted to go back to the army but Amnesty said, 'no, you should work with this private company.' I have been working with them for two years. I like the work. But the payment is low. Many reporters do this job. We have very many groups with that -- LRA, ADF. This helps being a CFP as well, knowing what people are doing." LRA, Kampala, M, 33

These jobs are not specific to one group or another, although individuals currently employed by the firms tend to recruit other former colleagues that they knew in the bush.

"Others are there -- many that were in LRA. And some from ADF, other groups -- we are all friends." LRA, Kampala, M, 23

These security jobs appeared to be a significant draw for former interviewees as the offer of permanent and salaried work is very rare for many of them. Unfortunately, several interviewees felt the companies were not treating them fairly and indicated that their salaries were still not enough to cover the costs in Kampala.

"Actually, the nature of the job is not so good because they underpay, over work, things are expensive, rents are very expensive, so the money we get we cannot save, we just get the money

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

to survive. Since I came, I have never gone home because I cannot save any money, I have never gone to see my parents.” LRA, Kampala, M, 23

“I got a small job for guarding. Since 2009, I worked at different companies -- I shifted to a different job because they started delaying the salaries. I was at the first firm for one-and-a-half years, but then shifted to another company.” LRA, Kampala, M, 40

(iii) Family members or friends

Family

Family often played an important part in an interviewee’s decision to move to a new location:

“My mother’s family was in Arua. They rang me and so I came. I then stayed with them.” WNBF, Arua, M, 44

“I have a cousin who invited me to come here [to Mbale] and keep the home because he was leaving for Sudan. I care for his children here.” LRA, Mbale, F, 54

In addition to social support and a place to stay, some family members were able to offer other assistance as well:

“I talked to my sister, and she welcomed me to come to Kampala. I stayed at my sister’s for two years. And my sister was a little bit well off so she could give me everything I wanted.” ADF, Kampala, F, 27

In many cases the arrangement proved unsustainable and the reporter would eventually find housing somewhere else.

“I had relatives there [in Kawempe] -- I stayed with them for seven months. I left that house to another place in the same area and started staying with my brother where I live now.” ADF, Kampala, F, 32

“My nephew was here in Kampala -- I stayed with him for three years and then I started living by myself.” LRA, Kampala, M, 45

“I moved to Butambala because my brother was there. But not many opportunities, just digging. The neighbors, treat me better, but things are not good for jobs, so I often come to Kampala to look for work.” ADF, Butambala (outside of Kampala), M, 56

Upon leaving IDP camps, several interviewees moved with their family to a family destination. Many of the reporters were still children when they left the camps so were more in a position to follow than to lead.

“I did not go back to Lapyem -- during that time we lost our father -- people who remained in Lapyem did not want my mother to have the land even before the war. So she decided to go where her family was -- to Lamola (near Kitgum). By then I was so young, so I was following my mother’s decision. But now if I can follow through with education, I want to go back.” LRA, Kitgum, M, 20

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"I went with my family to where our land was -- eight in my family -- mother, sister, brother, brother's wife, their two children, uncle and me (father died of sickness)." LRA, Lukwor (outside of Kitgum), M, 24

Friends

Many who experienced stigma from their family at home were unable to reach out to family networks elsewhere. However, due to the high level of migration in Uganda, many interviewees already knew people in other cities, providing them an additional opportunity. Some interviewees also maintained contact with other ex-combatants that they had known in the bush, providing them an expanded network.

"I knew friends there because I went to school in Kampala before the rebel group." WNBF, Kampala, M, 46

"I had friends in Kampala. I communicated to them and explained to them my problem and they accepted. I stayed with my friend for 2006-2007." LRA, Kampala, M, 29

Some interviewees reported moving to a particular location primarily due to the presence of a former colleague in their rebel group:

"I didn't think of anywhere other than Kampala as an option...because I had a former colleague who had been in ADF staying in Kampala -- so I moved to Kampala to stay with that friend. She let me stay with her, but just for a limited time. I stayed there for three years." ADF, Kampala, F, 38

In most cases, interviewees recognized that staying with friends was only a short-term solution, eventually moving on after achieving some level of stability in their new location, though a few reported moving on due to the burden they felt they were placing on their friends:

"I stayed with my friend for two years. When I got here -- it was ok for some time, but deep down in my heart, I felt I was not being fair to the person I was staying with, because I wasn't contributing any money." ADF, Kampala, F, 40

No friends, no family

While a significant number of reporters were pulled by the presence of family or friends, it is also important to note that many reporters were not deterred by the lack of such connections and still moved with no known contacts waiting at their destination.

"I didn't know anyone in Kampala. I am here by myself, no one knows me, I have no relatives no friends when I came -- the friends I have, I got here." LRA, Kampala, M, 23

"When I got here I was stranded, I didn't know anyone, just started staying on the street. I stayed there for two weeks then got a friend who assisted me - a lady - and the lady let me come live with her and work in her house. I stayed with that lady for six months, then saved enough to rent a place by myself." LRA, Kampala, F, 29

(iv) Access to other land

This factor often worked in tandem with the draw of family to other rural destinations.

“My uncles and aunts live in Mukono so they would provide me with basic needs to take back to Luwero. Also in Mukono there is a lot of land where I can dig -- my aunt and uncle’s land.” ADF, Luwero/Mukono, F, 39

(v) Freedom from fear and stigmatization

As previously discussed in Section 4.5b, social exclusion, stigma and discrimination were significant Push Factors in interviewees’ decisions to migrate. Consequently, it was not surprising to find that a particular location’s ability to offer freedom from such issues was a significant draw for these individuals. Furthermore, it was found that interviewees driven from their communities by violence and fear were pulled to their destination communities for many of the same reasons, which interviewees characterized as anonymity, lack of stigma, and increased security.

Anonymity

In response to being pushed from their communities by fear of retribution by rebel groups or the government, as well as stigma in their home communities, many interviewees reported being pulled to larger cities by the possibility of anonymity. As explored previously in Section 4.5b, many ex-combatants found it impossible to continue residing in their communities of origin due to stigmatization and fear, and the anonymity of large urban centers offered them a fresh start. This was especially true of those interviewees who returned prior to the Amnesty Act or while fighting was still ongoing.

“To a great extent it is anonymous here compared to my village where everyone knew about my past.” ADF, Mutundwe (outside of Kampala), M, 41

“My mother thought it best for me to come to Kampala where everyone minds their own business.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 44

“In Arua they might look at you badly...but after you’ve stayed for a long time, they forget that you were a rebel. They saw that I was not doing anything.” WNBF, Arua, M, 44

Although their new community offered a higher level of anonymity than their previous one, some reporters continued to feel compelled to keep a very low profile due to fear of re-capture or reprisal:

“I am just being sheltered in Kampala but don’t move around much -- I still fear going outside because I would be picked again.” ADF, Kampala, M, 36

“I only stayed inside the house -- because I had not yet reported to any authority so if they caught me, I would have been arrested.” ADF, Kampala, F, 35

“I was afraid the government would arrest me and take me to Luzira – then, if you were in the town they would pick you up and take you to prison.” WNBF, Arua, M, 49

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Lack of Stigma

Stigma by the community and family members weighed heavily on many reporters and thus they were anxious to find a destination that would provide them a different environment.

"There is no stigma in Pece. People know I was in the LRA, but there is no stigma. I am just treated on how I behave." LRA, Pece, M, 31

A common theme which permeated such interviews revolved around reporters' sense of "freedom."

"Here you are just free, they don't call you names or care." LRA, Kampala, M, 53

"Our issues right now, especially in Yumbe, people run away to places where there is freedom. People make allegations in Yumbe and places like that which forces people to come to Arua. In Arua, there is nothing like that." UNRF I & II, Arua, M, 60

"I've seen no problem. People know and I'm a free man." WNBF, Kampala, M, 52

Another common theme encountered throughout the interviews centered on "peace."

"Life from village to town is different. In the village, many do not understand well. We came to Kampala to get some peace. There were opportunities in Gulu, but the relatives would talk. Here, there are many tribes and I feel at peace." LRA, Kampala, M, 38

In speaking of stigma, some interviewees drew a distinction between rural and urban communities.

"It was a town so people were accepting." LRA, Mbale, M, 45

"You know all the people in town, there is a difference in people in town and the people in the village. In town there is not so much stigma." ADF, Kampala, M, 38

"People in Arua are more open-minded and literate than the village." WNBF, Arua, M, 56

While most interviewees in urban communities reported being open about their past and facing no negative consequences, others have been largely silent and secretive about their past, using the anonymity of larger towns and cities to avoid the issue of stigma altogether. The latter was particularly common for women.

Increased security

Particularly during the emergency phase in Uganda, people were drawn either to cities with a barracks that could protect them from the rebel groups or to Kampala where there was no rebel fighting.

(vi) Marriage

Many women move for marriage, however many ex-combatant women are no longer seen as fit wives after their time in rebel groups. These women often must look outside the traditional networks for finding a husband and move to locations where they can anonymously start a new life. Therefore, as with economic opportunities, some women move due to a specific marriage offer or because their husband is moving, while many move for the prospect of marriage only found through anonymity.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"My husband moved to Kampala for job, and I followed." ADF, Kampala, F, 38

"I moved to Akworo for marriage." LRA, Akworo (outside of Kitgum), F, 18

(vii) Vocational Training

Several reporters, particularly in areas receiving significant NGO support, were drawn to larger cities by training and education. The provision of this valuable training encouraged people to move from their homes to access it. Additionally, many who moved for the training then found that their newly acquired skills could not be utilized back in their home villages largely due to low demand or lack of tools to use in the village, along with other factors, and thus often stayed on in that area.

(viii) Proximity to the Amnesty Commission

Upon their return, most interviewees reported receiving a reinsertion package, which included assistance for their return home. However, many felt that either they were promised more assistance or that there was a chance of more to come and thought that they could increase their chances of receiving additional assistance by moving closer to the Amnesty Commission headquarters in Kampala. Due to past experience, reporters perceived such assistance to be extremely limited and believed that benefits would reach those in Kampala before reaching other communities across the country. Of the interviewees, 10.7% stated that this was a factor in their decision to migrate, however only 3.3% of the interviewees indicated that it was a primary influence in their decision.

"I wanted to be near the Amnesty office in case of additional assistance." LRA, Mbale, M, 37

"I just came to look for a job and be near Amnesty Commission head office. I want to be near -- when they call me I will just come for my money." LRA, Kampala, M, 53

"I decided to come to Kampala because the headquarters of Amnesty Commission was here so it would be easier to be assisted." LRA, Kampala, F, 29

Some interviewees linked this phenomenon to communication challenges amongst some reporters:

"Communication with these others is a problem because some don't have phones, so they come and stay near the Amnesty Commission. Communication is a problem here at the Amnesty Commission." ADF, Kampala, M, 44

And then there were a few interviewees who demobilized via Kampala en route to home, but decided to stay put until the "big" assistance materializes:

"They offered to take me home, but I stayed behind because I expected more from the Amnesty office. My family left Arua and came to Kampala. I thought we would get something big so we could go home and build a house." WNBf, Kampala, M, 52

Among those interviewed who came to Kampala for these reasons, there appeared to be significant disappointment and frustration regarding the reinsertion packages, including the common complaint that reporters were initially promised resettlement assistance including such things as a house and land.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"The Amnesty Commission told us they would do those things, vocational training like tailoring, carpentry, they told us to wait. That's why we are here. I came to Kampala waiting for these things from Amnesty, but also looking for a job." LRA, Kampala, M, 53

"I thought the closer I was to the office I would get my housing package." ADF, Kampala, M, 48

Also, several interviewees who came to Kampala to be near the Amnesty Commission have yet to even receive the initial reinsertion package:

"After we left WNBF, I tried to make something to look after my children, some job. Now my daughters were supposed to be seniors, but I cannot send them to school now. My wife has left because of these difficulties. In 2000, I came here looking for the Amnesty office, but they could not do anything. Others got the package, but I did not. I have wasted my time coming back here and asking." WNBF, Kampala, M, 48

(ix) [Hope of] Basic needs assistance

Many who were experiencing challenges upon their return were pulled to their current destination by the hope of basic needs assistance from various organizations, namely large mosques and churches in urban areas which were widely known for distributing basic necessities for those in need.

"You can just go to a mosque in Kampala and ask for assistance." ADF, Kampala, M, 48

"Here in Kampala, as per our faith, especially on prayer days, the faithful are told of the plight of such people, so there are some contributions. This is not true in the village, so couldn't even get a bar of soap, but here can wait for Juma Fridays and go to the mosque and come back with some soap or some sugar or something. There are very few Muslims in my village - initially I was not a Muslim, just became a Muslim after getting [married to] that man in 1994." ADF, Kampala, F, 35

(x) Health/ Psychological services

As with basic needs assistance and vocational training, many interviewees reported frequently finding that adequate health and psychological services were only available to them in the larger urban areas. Few of the individuals interviewed voiced issues with finding adequate health and psychosocial services, but for those for whom it was an issue, it was a major factor for migration.

"They have better health center and clinics [in Laroo], but mostly I went because of my husband" LRA, Laroo (outside of Gulu), F, 25

"When I came back I got very sick, got tuberculosis of the bone. Up until now the bone still hurts. In 2003, I went to the big hospital and they treated me there, but that bone remained like that. It is good for me to be around Kampala, because other places if you get sick you have to pay, but here it is free and it is nearby." ADF, Kampala, M, 35

The most common health concern among interviewees who voiced having challenges in this area was the continued presence of bomb splinters that continue to cause pain, especially when these individuals attempt physically demanding work such as digging [working land] or carrying [portering], which also appeared to be two of the most common means of acquiring income amongst the sample.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"I am continuing treatment for these bomb fragments" LRA, Kampala, M, 38

Moving to urban areas for HIV/AIDS treatment also ranked high among interviewees who moved for health reasons.

"I must go for HIV/AIDS treatment" ADF, Kampala, M, 45

(xi) Education (for self or children)

Another factor weighing heavily on interviewees decisions to migrate was education for themselves and their children.

"I wanted to be near Kampala so that children could get education. It is easier here because they learn English very well. Other places they won't." LRA, Kampala, M, 51

However, education seemed to have made little impact on interviewee migration to date, but rather appeared to heavily influence whether they planned to stay in their current location or migrate elsewhere.

While rare, several interviewees did choose to return to school upon their return, however schools were usually either found in their community or they were sent to boarding school, returning home upon completion of their studies.

In general, the reporters voiced much concern over paying school fees, but this primarily focused the individual on the need for financial stability to cover such costs.

(xii) Proximity to initial community

In the majority of cases, interviewees reported returning to desperate situations, which forced them to move elsewhere. The reporters often found themselves with little money and few resources, making proximate destinations very attractive. Oftentimes, the next destination was simply the closest or cheapest place that they could access while still avoiding the factors that caused them to move away in the first place.

"Proximity – I had thought of Jinja, but Mbale was much cheaper and closer." LRA, Mbale, M, 45

"I went to Kampala because the distance was short." WNBF, Kampala, M, 58

"[I moved to Mbale due to] proximity, low cost of relocation." LRA, Mbale, M, 45

Some interviewees reported having such few resources that whether or not they could walk to their destination factored heavily in their decision of where they would ultimately move to:

"It was cheaper than going to Masindi; I could foot it to Zombo." WNBF, Arua, M, 40

"Mbale was the only place I could walk to." LRA, Mbale, F, 41

PULL FACTORS - Return to Community of Origin

Many reporters have returned to their community of origin after migrating elsewhere. The factors pulling them back reflect almost identically the rationales discussed above regarding the initial return from the bush. These include the feeling that “it is home”, that their family is there (immediate or extended) and they wish to return to them, that they have family obligations, the return of safety and security to the region, access to land or the need to protect that land from others, and housing.

In addition, a primary driving factor for interviewees to return home was simply the removal of an initial push factor such as insecurity, economic need, or the reduction of stigma over time.

“Then Amnesty [Commission] came and they said that we could come back -- But then I was working in Kampala and making money. Also I was fearing Amnesty and wasn’t sure, but then I got information from others that there was nothing wrong now, so I could come home.” WNBf, Arua, M, 49

“My wife called me back. She opened a small place for cooking, and then she said now you come back – I came back in 2003. I wasn’t doing anything in Kampala.” WNBf, Arua, M, 69

4.5e Evolution of migration factors over time

Since the passage of the Amnesty Act and the formation of the Amnesty Commission in 2000, there has been significant change in Uganda and progress for ex-combatants. This bears upon migration as many of the factors impacting ex-combatants decisions prior to the mid-2000s have since changed. In the early 2000s many regions of the country were still active combat zones. Fear of re-recruitment, retaliation and destruction by rebel groups acting in Uganda was high and the concerns very real. At the same time, many ex-combatants did not trust the Amnesty Commission’s neutrality and took several years to report due to fear of the government. Many ex-combatants never reported. Anecdotal evidence as to why points initially to lack of trust, and more recently to lack of perceived benefit by the ex-combatant. The combination of fear of the rebel groups and the government were expressed as significant aspects of the push factors causing ex-combatants to migrate. One common experience was the inability to work in their communities due to fear of being seen by the rebels or the government. In the early 2000s many ex-combatants were still in jails and others feared being incarcerated if caught. Several reporters interviewed spent significant periods of time hiding in the house and eventually migrated away to a location where they would be anonymous. Additionally, community members often feared being seen as opponents of the rebels, the government or both groups and thus would force ex-combatants to leave if found. Thankfully both the perception and reality seems to have since changed. Other communities were unable to accept back children who were only survivors of large abductions when the trauma was still fresh.

Additionally, due to a combination of factors including insecurity, a desire to reunite families and the large numbers of ex-combatants returning at once, many reporters stated that they had no choice in their initial destination after their return from the bush. While the majority desired to return home, and was in fact returned home, in some cases this was not in the best interest of the individual. Some were fully aware of factors that would make it impossible to successfully reintegrate in that community and thus eventual migration was virtually assured. As evidenced by the literature, many individuals originally joined rebel groups due to what they deemed impossible circumstances in their home communities including lack of economic opportunities, lack of land, community discrimination, political factors or

family problems. In these cases they were simply returned to those circumstances but with even greater obstacles after years in the bush. Most of these situations have since resulted in migration.

4.5f Summary and conclusion

- While the primary reason for migration was economic hardship, interviewees were compelled to migrate for reasons specific to their association with rebel groups, most notably extreme stigma, lost years of education, work experience and earned income, and land-related issues.
- Generally, interviewee migration was found to be motivated by not one, but multiple combined factors, though often driven by a single overarching primary push or pull factor such as extreme stigmatization, property loss, or a job offer.
- The choice to return or not return to one's community of origin was complex and nuanced, often involving many factors. Most interviewees, however, voiced a strong desire to return home at some time during their migration experience, and most actually did, if only for a short period of time.
- The most common reason for wishing to return to one's community of origin after demobilization centered on the profound desire to return "home" or to one's "homeland," which was largely perceived by interviewees to still possess all the benefits of being "home."
- Many interviewees, mainly those who went through reception centers, were given no alternative choice but to be returned to their community of origin. Numerous reporters returned without major incident, though several indicated that they would have not returned to their community at that point in time if given the choice, and would have opted instead to migrate elsewhere, given deteriorating security, economic, education, and social conditions in many areas.
- Those who had the choice and did not return home at first did so due to reasons ranging from fear of reprisal, discrimination and death, to the belief that better opportunities awaited elsewhere.
- Family and social networks were found to be the primary factors that facilitated migration decisions and plans amongst interviewees. Language was also found to facilitate moves to other locations. Likewise, the lack of family/social networks and language skills emerged as significant obstacles impeding interviewees' movement to new communities.
- Extreme stigma, followed by economic hardship, land issues due to absence, fear and threats, and stigmatization by family members, were found to be the most commonly cited reasons for leaving a particular community (primary push factors), though interviewees also reported being pushed by psychological challenges, loss of house/ material possessions, lack of health services, and the deteriorating conditions in IDP camps.
- Commonly cited push factors in leaving a non-origin community were that it was "not home," the high cost of urban living, the end of employment or support, and extreme stigma.
- Perception of economic opportunities (including firm job offers), family/friends assistance, and freedom from fear and stigmatization were found to be the most commonly cited reasons for being drawn to a particular community (primary pull factors), though interviewees also reported being pulled for access to other land, marriage, training, proximity to the Amnesty Commission, basic assistance, health/psychological services, education (for self or children), and proximity to initial community.
- Migration factors have changed over time, most notably since the end of hostilities in Uganda in the mid- to late-2000s. Fear of re-recruitment, retaliation and destruction by rebel groups and government forces had largely diminished, and stigmatization in many communities was on the

decline, therefore, interviewees’ current decisions to migrate were far less influenced by these factors as they were five or ten years ago.

The whole of Uganda appeared to be affected to some extent by migration stemming from the aftermath of a string of bloody conflicts encompassing years of violence, uncertainty, social unrest, and economic hardship. And indeed, ex-combatants have migrated for many of the similar reasons as non-combatants – economic hardship/opportunities, land tenure issues, destruction of property and social networks, displacement of family members, and compensation for years lost to war. However, it was found that most of the reporters interviewed had migrated for reasons specific to their former status as a rebel, known association with rebel groups, atrocities committed, or lost years removed from civilian society (living in the “bush”). Remove from the equation deep psychological impact, forced-crimes and atrocities, debilitating combat injuries, education/work experience/income lost, war-related displacement and death of family members and friends, and time spent away from property and society and it is arguable that far fewer of the individuals interviewed might have actually felt compelled to migrate as far, for as long, or migrate away at all. This does not appear to be the case for the vast majority of non-combatant Ugandans migrating for jobs, training, education or services who likely started their migration from a significantly higher baseline.

4.6 Next steps

The information covered in the preceding section (Section 4.5) discussed the factors which had impacted on interviewee migration decisions to date. However, the situation continues to evolve, as many interviewees confided a desire to migrate again. As most of the reporters moved out of necessity, they described their current situations as existing in a state of limbo [a common theme amongst the sample], voicing a profound desire to rebuild their lives into something sustainable and permanent.

Nearly 50% of the interviewees voiced a desire to stay in their current community, with over 35% wishing to return home and just under 15% wanting to move elsewhere. Of those planning to move either back home or elsewhere, very few seemed to have a tangible plan for how they would achieve their move.

However, there was a significant difference in responses between men and women which impacted on the overall average. Nearly 80% of females planned to stay in their current community with only 12% wanting to return home. Meanwhile more men planned to return home rather than stay, although their numbers were more balanced with around 45% wishing to return home and just under 40% wishing to stay. This was likely a result of the fact that male interviewees often left with the express intent of making additional money and then returning, whereas the female interviewees generally reported moving with the intent of staying on indefinitely.

Table 4 - Next move (by sex)

Next Move	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Plan to stay	37.5%	78.8%	49.6%
Want to return home	46.2%	12.1%	36.3%
Want to move elsewhere	16.3%	9.1%	14.2%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

The interviews revealed that an elevated percentage of those who needed startup capital or who had no current needs, planned to stay where they are; an elevated percentage of those who needed school fees for children wanted to return home; and, an elevated percentage of those who completed some secondary education wanted to return home (57.1% compared with 36.3%).

Interview questions informing this section probed topics related to self-assessment of reintegration and current situation, level of contentment with current location, plans for the future, desire to resettle, reasons for leaving/moving to a location, migration decision process, challenges faced, training and other assistance received, family and community reception, comparisons to other reporters and community members, friendships, openness about the past, current and past employment, meeting basic needs, land ownership and access, and involvement with community and community activities (worship, associations, etc.).

4.6a Intending to return home

Of those intending to return home a small and motivated group had a tangible plan to return. Interviews indicated that land plays a primary role in reporters' ability to return without facing continued extreme economic hardship, thus those with land solutions seemed more likely to be imminently moving. Of those interviewees who did not have children living with them, 70.6% wanted to return home (compared with 36.3% overall). Additionally, an elevated percentage of those who owned land (54.5% compared with 36.3% overall) wanted to return home. Finally, those who were completely open about their past seemed more likely to want to return home.

Returning to land

For some of the reporters, returning to their land is a necessary step in securing it for the future:

"The family land is small but there is other family land 62 miles away and I have discussed with my brother that I will move there soon. We are also worried that someone will take that land if we don't go protect it. But there is no health center up there and no good school up there so I haven't moved yet." LRA, Bungatira (outside of Gulu), M, 24

"I want to move back to my original homeland because I am afraid that if I don't go claim the land that others will because there is a lot of tension over land tenure." LRA, Kinene (outside of Gulu), F, 23

Some interviewees reported having already made visits home in preparation for a permanent move in the future:

"I am thinking of moving back in the next year. Now, I sometimes go and dig in my land in Awere in preparation for returning within the year. It is family land. When I get back to Awere, I will both farm and tailor." LRA, Lolojo (outside of Kitgum), F, 32

One younger interviewee intends to return home to settle after he has finished his education:

"I want to go back after I first finish my education, then after I finish, I will figure it out. When we left the IDP camp I was so young, so I was following my mother's decision. But now if I can follow through with education, I want to go back -- because where my mother comes from no one will give me land, so I need to go back to Lapyem and claim my father's land. Main reason I

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

would move back to Lapyem is for land. If all goes well I want to go back and settle in our own land and farm and settle and develop it.” LRA, Kitgum, M, 20

Still, others only intend to return home if their current efforts fail:

“I will go back at end of year if I still have no job.” LRA, Kampala, M, 24

Resuming agrarian livelihoods

While in some environments those returning from fighting were not interested in resuming an agrarian livelihood, we found no evidence of reporters returning with a distaste for hard work or farming. In fact, most interviewees emphasized that living in the bush [as a rebel] was a very hard life -- both physically and mentally -- and would be very pleased to be able to return to a peaceful life of farming.

“In the bush, you are doing the thing and it is not the aim – [in] that place, you cannot be happy - you are on the run -- so it was not difficult to come back and take up digging again. I was happy.” LRA, Kampala, M, 38

Some of those with injuries experienced pain when farming and others currently living in Kampala appreciated a more urban lifestyle, but overall, no aversion to an agrarian lifestyle was found.

“The bullet remains in my arm -- at the hospital, they found it was in the bone. No, it isn’t strange to be farming again, but it hurts because of my arm.” LRA, Kitgum, M, 26

“The situation of Kampala is not that of a village -- in the village you have to work very hard, look for firewood, fetch water. Here in Kampala there is a water tap -- and given my health condition it is better here.” ADF, Kampala, F, 40

Contingency factors for return

For the large majority of those planning to return home, their plan was contingent on some level of success in their current city or on the provision of additional assistance. As previously discussed, there were many Push Factors, which led interviewees to wish to leave. Frequently in such cases, however, the pull to remain in the current location was too strong or the reporter had little resources to facilitate such a move, so they had yet to leave.

Challenges and issues related to land were found to be perhaps the most significant impediments to resettlement amongst the sample:

“Everyone has a will to return home, but right now, right now we have the issue of land wrangles. I don’t know of any [reporters] who have been able to return home.” LRA, Gulu, F, 23

“I want to reclaim my land -- but right now, no land. There is no other problem why I couldn’t go back.” WNBF, Kampala, M, 40

“I want to move back home -- if I get my land back. The stigma situation is better.” WNBF, Arua, M, 56

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"I have family land but now it is squeezed...but if I can get a piece of land I would return." WNBF, Kampala, M, 50

Raising enough money for the return home also appeared to be a significant impediment to resettlement for many of the interviewees. The underlying motivations for seeking funding, however, varied considerably amongst the sample.

Some stated that they would first need to build a house in order to make such a move feasible:

"If I can build a house, I will go back to Arua." WNBF, Kampala, M, 55

"Koboko is a new district, (my children) could work in health, or as administrators, or as doctors - in new districts there are more jobs. But I need to build a house first. It is not dangerous there anymore. And most people there were fighters so there is no stigma." WNBF, Kampala, M, 45

"I have to wait until I have money to build a home." WNBF, Kampala, M, 52

Some reported that a move home was contingent upon returning with funding for an income-generating activity:

"Yes, I am looking to return. If I can get startup capital to start a small business in Koboko, I would return because that is home, that is my original place where my family is." LRA, Kampala, M, 29

"I need to go back to Koboko. If I had something to start some business I could go." LRA, Kampala, M, 43

"I'm just planning to raise some monies to help my family, but there is nothing and things are worsening. But otherwise I wouldn't like to stay here -- in Kampala there is nothing I like. I need to go back to the village, because even if I die here I will be taken back to the village, so there is no need for me to stay here. I'm not interested in staying in Kampala -- I need to go back." LRA, Kampala, M, 52

"If I had capital I would opt to go back to the village...to go do animal rearing and agriculture." LRA, Mbale, M, 62

A few candid interviewees revealed that raising funds was a matter of pride, as they felt they could not return with nothing:

"I cannot say for how long I will stay in Kampala. If I get enough money I will go back to the village. I don't have money, if I get money I will go home. I am also becoming mature, I have to marry and start my own family. I can't go home barehanded like this." LRA, Kampala, M, 23

"If I had a base, if I had some money [I would return]. I can't go back barehanded. I would need a job that pays better, which requires training or education that I don't have." WNBF, Kampala, M, 44

Several of the reporters said their move was contingent upon receiving outside assistance for resettlement:

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"When I get assistance, I will return." WNBF, Kampala, M, 57

"If I get any support I will go back -- just making enough now to survive. The people in my home community are now ok with me, so if had some assistance I could go back and continue life there." LRA, Mbale, M, 47

Some interviewees stated that they would return to their communities when they are able to secure employment or when the economic climate improves in those areas:

"If I get work in Arua, I could shift back there. But there is no work in Arua -- I am now working here so I can't go to Arua unless I get permission [from my job]." WNBF, Kampala, M, 40

"No one is still in Palabek -- most were killed by others because of me. It is in the past, but that is why I do not want to go stay there -- this place I am staying in Masindi is free. Now I want to go back home, now there is no problem. Even others they have gone back. Always, I was planning that I could buy land and go back. I am planning to go back, because I am seeing that now the rates are expanding -- the rate of rent and food. But I have to contribute money and go and look for some small, small business." LRA, Kampala, M, 40

"I went back to Arua, but I could not remain because of the situation. Now it is secure for us, but it is not good economically." WNBF, Kampala, M, 48

Health was also a contingency factor in moving home:

"When I am well, I want to go back to Gulu." LRA, Kampala, M, 53

"I want to go and settle in the village in my home area, the problem is I do not have enough money to go there, or to settle my family. I want to go, to cultivate and be in my house for my children for my family, but there is no way out. I am here until I get enough money and then I go. But of recent I got HIV/AIDS and I am undergoing treatment (here). This is new, I got it here in Kampala. Because of HIV this is a reason to not go back now, also people fearing me, not looking at me good, and other such things. I need medical treatment if I fall sick." LRA, Kampala, M, 52

4.6b Intending to move on

There were also a significant number of interviewees who did not want to stay where they were but faced extreme stigma in their home community and, therefore, felt they could not return. This seemed particularly prevalent among those from smaller rural communities that desired to dig or raise animals rather than participate in the lifestyle in Kampala. In Kampala, the high cost of living was also a driving factor for instilling a desire to leave.

As with those who wished to return home, few of those intending to move to a different location had an action plan on how to achieve that, though most had general ideas.

"In January, I found my father's land so I'm currently planning, digging and preparing the land. I plan to move in the dry season." LRA, Pece, M, 31

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"I want to stay until I have enough money to move to a better place with land." ADF, Kampala, F, 30

Of those interviewees wishing to move to a new location (other than their community of origin), many expressed a desire to move to a place where they could farm ("dig"):

"If there is any chance to get any land in the nearest district then I would do this. The problem with the home village is that there is no land, and also I am fearing the community." LRA, Kampala, F, 29

"The good thing about Kampala is that it is a peaceful way of living, because when I go back to the village I still remember what was happening. The problem is food, with the little money we have, and there is nowhere you can dig. When I have money, I want to buy land and go to the nearest district." LRA, Kampala, M, 29

"I don't have any hope of going back [to my village] again because of what they showed me before. So I am not happy. Now I am just looking for another place for my family. If I can get a piece of land and a small house where I can run my business...I would ideally go about 20 kilometers outside of Kampala." ADF, Kampala, M, 35

Others desired to move to a more urban destination, usually again for economic reasons:

"If I shifted again [from Kitgum], I would go to Gulu because of job opportunities." LRA, Waawo (Outside of Kitgum), F, 20

"Yes, definitely [I would shift again]. I think of Nairobi or other places. Anywhere for work." WNBF, Kampala, M, 56

"I want to shift into the city, to Kampala." LRA, Kampala, M, 51

4.6c Planning to remain

While many interviewees expressed a desire to move away from their current location, many have adjusted to their new location and appeared to be happy with their new lives. There were also several reporters who expressed discontentment with their current place of residence, but had no better option available to them and therefore planned to stay indefinitely, which did not seem to be dictated by current location but rather by individual circumstance. Everyone living in a smaller district capital planned to stay where they were.

Want to stay

Perhaps unsurprisingly, an elevated percentage of those who reported feeling integrated (61.1% compared with 49.6% overall) planned to stay where they were, and 40% of those who did not feel integrated expressed a desire to move elsewhere (way up from 14.2% on average).

"For sure, I want to stay in Mbale. I am received, I feel comfortable. If things work well in life, I want to make a life and stay here." FOBA, Mbale, M, 45

Regardless of whether or not they felt integrated, some interviewees reported that they would stay because they felt free from stigmatization in their new community:

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

"To a great extent it is anonymous here compared to my village where everyone knew about my past." ADF, Mutundwe (outside of Kampala), M, 41

"I wish to stay here because of that fear in my village, even today. And their life is worse there. You can manage [here in town] if you have something to do and the money. It is hard to convince those people to forget the past and move forward. It is hard to work as a community, share resources when people cannot trust you. They won't listen to your problems, no one will listen to me. I cannot live there." WNBF, Kampala, M, 35

"I rent here because in the village they know I am a rebel. I can't come back in the village. I will not leave Arua because sometime if I want a job, it is in Arua." WNBF, Arua, M, 44

Having employment and access to opportunities for themselves and their children also appeared to feed interviewee desires to stay:

"Whatever happens I prefer staying in Kampala because the opportunities are better here. And I would prefer Kampala because the children get better education here than elsewhere." ADF, Kampala, F, 35

"Arua is growing into another city. People are coming to Arua and now there is a lot of money here. Two borders have made business good, the place is developing. If God helps, I get some money and maybe some land." WNBF, Arua, M, 51

"I participate in a saving group. I have land. I currently have financial problems but I never think of leaving." LRA, Laroo (outside of Gulu), M, 31

Nowhere else to go

For some, the decision to stay or to leave was not really a decision at all; the question was all but irrelevant given that some interviewees would remain in their community simply because they had nowhere else to go.

"I don't think about leaving because I have no other place to go and I would really suffer." ADF, Kampala, F, 38

"It never crosses my mind to move -- nowhere else to go -- I prefer to struggle where I am." LRA, Gulu, F, 23

"It's not that I like Mbale, but I have nowhere else to go." FOBA, Mbale, M, 43

Many of those that did not have any other place to go were still not able to return to their community of origin due to extreme stigma. In fact, an elevated percentage of those who either spent no time or very little time at home after demobilization, planned to stay where they were. Furthermore, those who were currently experiencing the most stigmatization planned to stay where they were; no one who was currently experiencing significant stigmatization wished to move elsewhere.

"I don't think I ever will [return home]. There are permanent people residing there and they cannot forget and you cannot forget because they are always there." ADF, Kampala, M, 44

"I feel I would be threatened in Bukonde." LRA, Mbale, M, 45

However, several interviewees voiced a desire to be able to visit their communities of origin, although they planned to continue to stay in their current community.

"I want to stay in Mbale but be able to visit home one day." LRA, Mbale, M, 45

"One day I would like to go back home to visit to tell my story." LRA, Mbale, F, 40

4.6d Flexible on destination for land or money

Many of those interviewed expressed that they would be willing to either stay or move anywhere for land or money.

"I would move anywhere to get money for my family." ADF, Kampala, M, 48

While many of the reporters voiced a high degree of flexibility, as expected, land played a major role in dictating that decision:

"If I manage to get some land where I can stay, then I would stay here. If there is a job I will go to those other places. I may only return [home] not for long, just to visit for a short time. But I do not see myself returning permanently." LRA, Kampala, M, 37

"I am willing to move anywhere if I could get enough money to buy land. Right now it's hard to tell because I don't know where I would go. I pray if I got enough money for land -- it could be Gulu, it could be anywhere -- just somewhere to find peace for me and my children." LRA, Gulu, F, 28

4.6e Summary and conclusion

- Nearly half of the interviewees (80% of females) wished to stay in their current community, while just over 35% wanted to return home, and just under 15% wanted to move elsewhere.
- Of those who currently intended to return home, interviewees with solutions to land issues appeared to be closest to making the move, though others would likely return home if their current efforts to find employment or secure livelihoods, failed.
- No evidence was found to support the conjecture that reporters return with an aversion to farming and performing other manual labor beyond that of their non-combatant counterparts. In fact, barring inhibiting medical conditions, most interviewees displayed enthusiasm for having the opportunity to return to farming or a similar activity, if it was both peaceful and a sustainable livelihood.
- For most planning to return home, making the trip was largely contingent upon economic success in their current location, from both a standpoint of pride and practicality, but also contingent upon the resolution of land issues back home, as well as assistance in various forms.
- Due to extreme stigma or land issues faced in their community of origin, and other challenges faced in their current community, several interviewees voiced a desire to move elsewhere.
- Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who wished to remain in their current community reported feeling far more integrated than the overall average, and cited this as the reason for staying. Some stated that they would stay due to freedom from stigmatization and access to opportunities for themselves and their children.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

- Some interviewees said they would stay in their current location simply because they had no place else to go, due to some inhibiting factor in their community of origin such as stigmatization, or the lack of networks or opportunities elsewhere.
- Many of the reporters expressed a willingness to stay or move anywhere for the opportunity to have their own land or earn money.

In general, those who felt a high degree of integration, self-sufficiency and satisfaction in their current community envisioned themselves staying in that location for an indeterminate period of time. However, it must be noted that on some level most interviewees, including those who planned to stay, wished to return to their community of origin at some point in the future, circumstances permitting. A large part of the enthusiasm for resuming agrarian lifestyles, in fact, could likely be attributed to the profound desire expressed by many to reclaim the land of their fathers and resume a peaceful and familiar existence removed from the violence, destitution and humiliation that continues to define their respective universes. All of these things – land tenure, sustainable livelihoods, freedom from fear and discrimination, education for self and children, physical and emotional well-being – are but reflections and manifestations of one singular and all-consuming desire to live in dignity and peace. For these individuals, migration is an ongoing struggle to find and hold on to those two things, and home will be wherever they succeed in their endeavor.

4.7 Differentiated experiences by group

While many trends emerged from the sample as a whole, we also looked to explore if themes would emerge by rebel group or by region which could be strongly correlated. Differences by gender and by age group or life phase were also assessed through the interviews. While there is little literature on differing needs by rebel group, the findings on women experiencing additional stigma and on the challenges for children returning as youths to adult responsibilities all resonated strongly in the research.

4.7a Differentiated experiences by rebel group

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

The LRA is best known for its mass recruitment of child soldiers. According to UNICEF, “During more than 20 years of civil war and strife, an estimated 35,000 Ugandan children were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army and trained as soldiers to kill on behalf of the rebels.”⁵ Most of those that were in the LRA were abducted as children from the Acholi region in the north. As a result many in the LRA missed out on prime educational years, lost family and support networks at a very young age and in relation to the overall reporter population are much younger than others, and have different needs of education and training. Also, many of the former LRA reporters are just now coming of age, which includes needing their own land and having their own families. While many have not had to migrate yet, this group may start migrating for the same economic reasons that the older reporters that did not experience stigma in groups such as ADF or WNBF have been for several years.

“At first I was welcomed, but then after I decided to start a family then my uncle started quarreling with me because he wanted land. [I] moved to look for a place with my own house.”
LRA, Pece, M, 31

⁵ <http://www.unicefusa.org/news/news-from-the-field/award-winning-documentary-child-soldiers-uganda.html>

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

In the Acholi region, local religious, traditional and government leaders advocated on behalf of the children with their communities and with the government that these were children and should not be blamed for their participation in the horrendous activities of the LRA. Mass community peace and reconciliation dialogue campaigns were conducted by the Amnesty Commission but also by the local groups and individuals. Many of the Acholi also believed in cleansing the returning children through a traditional ceremony. Others would welcome the children back through prayer, community celebrations, or local government-led events to forgive the returning children. While many of those abducted as children faced stigma when they returned, and some extreme stigma that resulted in migration away from their communities, this was significantly reduced by these efforts in the region. Many were surprised when they returned to find that they were actually forgiven for their past and reaccepted into communities where terrible atrocities had been committed. Additionally, the large majority of the Ugandan child reporters were in the LRA, and all reporters under the age of 18 went to reception centers for a period of time before returning home. Many felt this helped them psychologically and socially to move forward and reintegrate more successfully.

“There is a traditional name for if something got lost and is found - it is a welcome ceremony. It was just to welcome me back. Over 120 people came together - the neighbors, my sisters and their people, and some bring gifts, like food stuff, others bring cosmetics, pens because I was a student, others small money for transport. Some just come and say thank you, welcome back, we praise God for what has happened, then a person led a mass. I just briefed them on my life and how the situation was there. Then after the story, all gather together to eat, celebrate and everyone goes home. I felt like a person who was supposed to be in the community, I felt they were loving me.” LRA, Kampala, M, 23

Another differentiating factor of the reporters of Northern Uganda is the insecurity that persisted in the region until recently. Firstly, many migrated away due to this insecurity for fear of re-abduction by the rebel group or retribution by the Ugandan army. In addition, while some reporters had been reintegrating for over a decade, it may have been too early to tell how well reintegration has worked for many former LRA. Much of the population in the north was in IDP camps until 2006-2008, so the children/young adults were being “reintegrated” into an IDP camp setting. As such, much of the population was currently working through land issues, which have been in flux as everyone is returning, but with different family members.

The LRA was also able to recruit several members to their cause particularly in the earlier days of the group’s formation and from the southeastern region of the country (Mbale/ Soroti area). The reporters that joined the LRA tended to face extreme stigma upon their return.

Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

As with those that volunteered for the LRA, the former combatants of the ADF returned to significant stigma. This group was fighting in Uganda until very recently and the affected communities remember. Many former ADF combatants were unable to return to their communities of origin and faced threats on their life if they did. ADF members are Muslim, which is also a difference in a largely Christian country. The mosques, particularly in Kampala, have been known for their generosity and forgiveness and many have been able to access assistance through this channel as well as to build social networks and obtain work.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Many reporters from the ADF were assisted in their return by an organization called Give Me A Chance which coordinated with the Amnesty Commission in getting the reporters amnesty as well as training and in some cases materials for rebuilding their houses and restarting their lives.

It is also important to note that those in the ADF primarily volunteered. In this case, the specific factors causing an individual to join the rebellion may continue to be present in their communities after their return.

"When I first got back there was nothing, and my father is very old and very, very poor. Generally my family is poor. Here in Kampala you can get small jobs with which you can get food at least. There is God and then there is [the devil], the poverty was what helped Lucifer to guide me into those activities in the first place." ADF, Kampala, M, 38

The ADF reporters varied in age and educational level.

West Nile Bank Front (WNBF)

The WNBF reporters were also distinct in many ways. The WNBF was primarily made up of former Ugandan army officers and enlisted men. Many of these individuals were in the army since they joined at a young age and fully identify as soldiers. Additionally, while some came back in smaller groups, a majority of the WNBF reporters spent several years in prison before they were released with the advent of the Amnesty Act.

There has been a great deal of camaraderie among the members of the WNBF and these interviewees were rarely not open about their past and reported experiencing very little stigma. All WNBF reporters that were interviewed were male, although they mentioned that there were also women and families with them in the bush.

These men are also much older than their counterparts in other groups and also tend to be educated, speak English, and have experience and connections. Several of the WNBF members were drivers in the army and have been able to find work as drivers upon their return. Other WNBF members often assist them in finding these jobs.

WNBF members do often face land tenure issues -- largely due to absence. When they were forced to flee all the land was vacated and many community members capitalized on the situation. After decades away, the rights to that land has often been in debate with titles lost and clans unsure of proper ownership. Before leaving, many of those in leadership positions in the WNBF had significant land holdings and were well off, including usually having two or three wives. Although many were concerned over the loss of their possessions, many still had some land and a wife, which was significantly more than many in other groups returned to. Dr. Anthony Finn's qualitative study (undertaken during Aug-Sep 2011 for the purposes of evaluation) found that none of the seven WNBF reporters interviewed had land tenure issues. The discrepancy here may likely be attributed to varying notions of land tenure amongst WNBF reporters, given that many of the reporters in the West Nile region do in fact have access to communal land holdings, but may not necessarily view this as having sufficient land of their own. Furthermore, as previously discussed in the sections dealing with land tenure, current land holdings for many of these individuals have been drastically diminished from previous land holdings prior to the reporters' involvement with rebel groups.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Those interviewed from the WNBF tended not to have noticeable psychological problems or bad memories and largely did not face stigma from their families or community upon their return. Many indicated that the reason for this difference was that they did not injure civilians and only fought the government rather than several other groups that destroyed the local communities and people.

“Our system of fighting was unique, we were not disturbing innocent local people, we only fought government soldiers. We joined because our rights had been denied. We had served the government, but then we were pushed out and government didn’t even consider us.” WNBF, Arua, M, 52

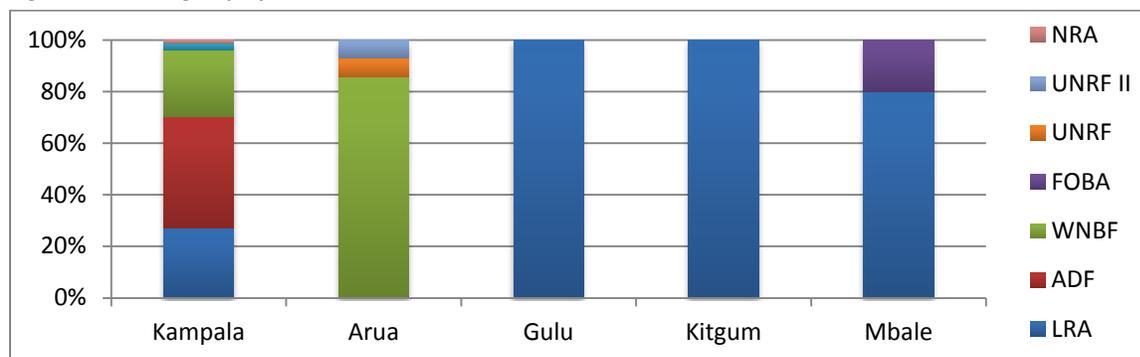
“It was at the demand of the elders that we come back, and they had pleaded to government that we come back. When we returned it felt the same - the relationship was really proper - they had been longing for us, and they were very welcoming.” WNBF, Arua, M, 51

“After 1979 war, everyone [many who later joined WNBF] left fast into exile, and the land was free and that’s when they had the chance of taking the land.” WNBF, Arua, M, 49

“Those who came back to this region and they are from this region have a very big problem with land. After they returned people started calling them killers and rebels - had to step in and tell the AC, government had to intervene. It is still not totally solved. Our biggest problem here is the land problem.” WNBF, Arua, M, 51

As mentioned, rebel group correlated closely with region outside of Kampala as is evidenced by Figure 18 below:

Figure 15 - Rebel group by DRT



In terms of next steps and potential services for ex-combatants it is critical to note that, there are again differences by region and rebel group in Kampala. The majority of WNBF interviewees had a strong desire to return to their communities of origin. They were forced to leave the region either due to insecurity or economic need and now that the security factor is gone, economic and land issues are their primary concerns. UNRF II faced additional stigma than the WNBF but otherwise seem to follow similar patterns as the rest of the West Nile. For the LRA in Acholi communities, ex-combatants were primarily abducted as children and many community leaders advocated strongly with the government and their communities that the children could not be faulted for their abduction or their actions while captured. While some were unable to return, a large number of communities were able to accept these children back into their midst. For many of the LRA who migrated away, this was a primarily economic choice caused by lack of employment or land. As with the WNBF they desire to return home but are displaced until they can earn a sustainable livelihood. As discussed in the analysis of age many LRA ex-combatants

in the Acholi region are only now beginning young adulthood and thus it is unclear exactly what migration patterns will be forthcoming. On the other hand, those that left due to extreme stigma or were unable to initially return home were often in such extreme situations that they would never be able to return. For the ADF, the picture is somewhat different. They faced significantly more stigma from their communities than the WNBF due to the heightened impact on those communities. Additionally, they primarily volunteered to join which muted calls for peace, dialogue and reacceptance such as those in the Acholi communities. Additionally, the ADF conflict is still an active concern for some, making the fears of rebel group retaliation and government reaction more salient. The LRA from the Teso region in the East are much less discussed. These individuals and ex-combatants from other groups from the Mbale and Soroti areas primarily volunteered in response to poor community conditions and have likely either successfully settled back into their original communities, or else were rejected by those communities and plan to stay away.

4.7b Differentiated experiences by gender

There were also many differences found in the experiences of women in contrast to men. While this study focused only on reporters who had migrated, the quantitative research undertaken by Dr. Anthony Finn during Aug-Sep 2011 found that female reporters shift more than male reporters, and also more than male or female non-combatants community members. Through our interviews, the female reporters more frequently referenced stigma as the rationale for migration, as compared to men who often move for purely economic reasons. Women are often subject to stigma due to their children. Those that had children before they left often experience anger from the community for leaving those children both as a traditional role and as a burden on the rest of the community. Those that had children while in the bush often experience stigma for being an unmarried mother, and their lack of marital status means that they have no land to work and by extension that their children have no rights to land as they follow the father.

“The stigma is mainly towards me -- when it came to the kids, mainly just that they were a burden -- it was bad, my mother couldn’t care for them -- but within the community they were being isolated.” ADF, Kampala, F, 38

Another related factor to family and community stigma was marriage challenges. Traditional networks arranged meetings and at times marriages between villages. Reporters facing stigma often were no longer able to meet a spouse in the same way.

“Also the men used to fear me -- were calling me to be a difficult lady. So they weren’t interested.” LRA, Mbale, F, 41

More men than women seem to be open about their past and more men seem to have networks of friends in Kampala made during their time in the bush. Many men only plan to stay in Kampala until they have enough money to return to their home communities (are trying to save enough to buy land and/or build a house). Men have additional challenges when not able to find work as in Ugandan culture this undermines their role as men and their position in the family

The type of migration often differs by gender with women more likely to move for marriage or be attracted to skills training while men tend to move for the prospect of finding work.

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

Women do not have rights to land in Uganda. They do not have issues with losing land, but this makes them more economically dependent than men on either their family or marriage for their basic existence.

"I am a woman, so I had no claim to my father's land" LRA, Kampala, F, 39

"The structure where I used to stay was demolished -- my parents' house. Demolished by the clan members. Because the girl child is marginalized. My brothers also participated in this." LRA, Mbale, F, 54

In addition, more women than men choose to keep their past a complete secret. Living with this secret seems to weigh on these women, many of whom do not tell their husbands for fear the men will leave if they find out.

"I was the only one in that place who joined the ADF - not even all the relatives knew I had gone to the bush, they had assumed that I had disappeared with a man and shifted for marriage - apart from the few insiders who knew." ADF, Kampala, F, 35

Anecdotally it seems that female ex-combatants have a higher likelihood of being a single mother than average female Ugandans, although statistics are lacking to be sure. Regarding the differences between male and female ex-combatants several respondents had opinions:

"It is harder for women. When it comes to the men they can easily adjust to conditions, or do odd jobs, those that require a lot of strength." ADF, Kampala, F, 32

"The difference between men and women formerly with ADF is that the women many are not employed and they are just staying with their friends. The men might also not be doing work, but might find that he has some little money to pay rent, unlike the woman." ADF, Kampala, F, 38

"The community at times feels happy with men, because they know that when the men are there they will help fight, and they think men will plan to keep their homeland, but women are very weak. But with women they think women will keep linking with the bush. Also, it is very hard to convince a man to protect a woman who is not their woman - and especially because these women were given to men in the bush." LRA, Kampala, F, 29

"It is harder for women, women find it more difficult. If a woman is to get assistance she finds that much harder than for the men. Women have many problems for instance my health problem - I am not just going to approach anyone to assist me. I had a problem giving birth - had female complications. ADF people didn't want to know, just let me go." ADF, Kampala, F, 27

"The challenges are not different for women or men. The challenges are the same." ADF, Kampala, M, 36

4.7c Differentiation by age: children and youth vs. adults

Children and youth are a group that was less explored in this research as it was limited to individuals over the age of 18, but it appears this difference in life phase impacts ex-combatant migration. All interviewees 25 and under were associated with the LRA. Several of these individuals expressed deep concerns over their missed education and cessation of support programs that had been allowing them

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda

to attend school. When these programs stopped, these individuals could not pay the costs alone and most dropped out.

"I just needed to continue with studies. I was going to school at the camp but it wasn't a good school at the camp. The feeling I have is that there are some people that hadn't done so well in studies, but now they have gone ahead and passed me." LRA, Kitgum, M, 20

Additionally, while they had left as children, many returned to financial and familial responsibilities that did not allow them to consider school. Concern for their future was another common theme among the younger interviewees as they look to build families but do not have resources, education, training, life skills or land. As these individuals age they will increasingly build families of their own; they will require land and additional resources – factors that older ex-combatants reported to have caused fractures in their family relations and with their communities.

"Upon my return, I was thinking, when I return I will be somebody with a vision for the future, I was expecting that someone might be able to assist me a bit. In 2009 I decided to leave and come to Kampala. Because from there you cannot get anything to do or receive. The land there is squeezed. No one can give me land to cultivate." LRA, Kampala, M, 24

"I don't have money, if I get money I will go home. I am also becoming mature, I have to marry and start my own family. I can't go home barehanded like this." LRA, Kampala, M, 23

"Then no one could even be in the villages, but now that people are going back there is a lot of arguing over the land." LRA, Lukwor, M, 24

The younger interviewees were found in Gulu and Kitgum where migration was typically due to the family living in an IDP camp and then moving to an alternate location when feasible. Thus any migration reflected that of their family. Most in this group were very young when they returned and thus were rejoined with their families if families could be found or with the extended family network if stigma prevented their initial reunification.

These once child-soldiers have been in a different life phase than many of the other ex-combatants. However, this group are now young adults and anecdotal evidence points to them beginning to follow some of the migration patterns of other adult Ugandans and ex-combatants – needing to move for economic factors, land and other factors that come with scarcity of resources.

Another difference between children and adults is their treatment through the Amnesty process. All children were sent to reception centers where they received some sort of counseling and a period of safety and preparation before returning to their families and communities. Adults less frequently had this opportunity.

Another associated group of concern is the children born in the bush either out of wedlock or through a forced marriage. Mothers of these children are often rejected by their communities, which leads to the children having no extended family and no inheritance or land or anything else. Typically families will assist in paying for school fees, but again, this is not an option for these children. Many of these children did not receive medical care, received no education or training and grew up unaware of their community customs or normal life. Additionally many of these children were under the age of twelve when they returned, were thus not registered as reporters and consequently did not receive any services from the Amnesty Commission or the government.

“The reporters I know haven’t gone home because most of them are [illegitimate], and there they have no place to belong.” LRA, Gulu, F, 24

For most of the reporters that are still young, the need for migration by this sub-group will likely intensify in coming decades.

4.7d Summary

- Migration themes also cut along the lines of rebel group and region, gender and age, and recognizing service needs particular to each group may impact heavily on future success in programming, policymaking and service provision.
- Those formerly with the LRA were among the youngest rebel soldiers in Uganda, and a majority of these reporters were abducted from their communities by LRA forces at a young age. As a result of younger ages, many LRA interviewees were just reaching the age in which migration push and pull factors would begin to weigh more heavily in their decision-making processes.
- The traditional structures in the Acholi region (Northern Uganda) were instrumental in paving the way for the return of former rebels through peace and reconciliation dialogue activities and cleansing rituals in towns and villages across the region. This community preparation, combined with the fact that most former LRA rebels were abductees, resulted in significantly higher levels of acceptance among family and community members. However, adults who were known to have joined the LRA on their own volition tended to face extreme stigmatization upon their return home.
- LRA-induced violence impacted heavily on the communities of the North as well as other areas, resulting in ongoing attempts at re-abduction of escapees and mass forced-migration due to insecurity.
- Former-ADF combatants returned to significant stigmatization in their communities, as they were primarily adult volunteers, Muslims in a predominately Christian country, and generally lacked the community preparation that the Acholi leaders were able to offer in the North.
- WNBF fighters were primarily former Ugandan army soldiers aligned with Idi Amin, and many had been associated with an armed group since joining in the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, the majority of WNBF is male, and tends to be older and more educated than their LRA or ADF counterparts. Many former WNBF had spent several years in prison as a result of their rebel status, and most had never received the demobilization services and support that younger reporters had received from other rebel groups.
- Due to age and status in their communities, WNBF members tend to have had land at one point, and consequently are facing land tenure issues, largely due to their protracted absence away from their communities.
- Migration experiences also varied by gender; women were more frequently found to have moved due to stigma and discrimination than men; perhaps related, women seemed to be far less open about their past as a rebel than men as well; women frequently moved for marriage as well.
- The difference in children’s life phase appeared to impact on migration as younger interviewees were much more preoccupied with resuming education, and returned as adults to financial and familial responsibilities that did not allow them to consider school.