

CONFLICT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

UGANDA

Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy in Conflict-Affected Contexts Programme

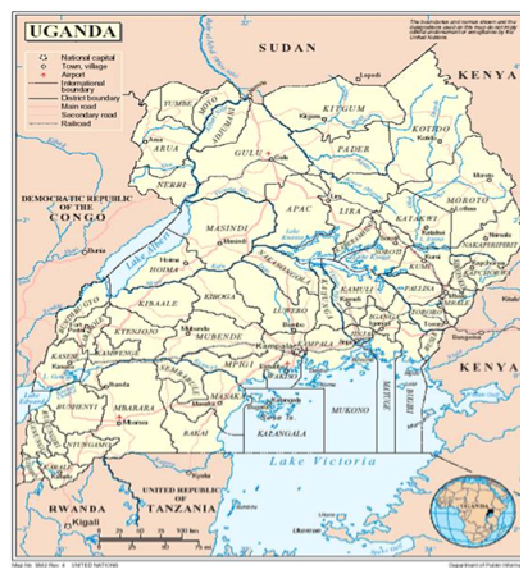
This report summarizes findings from a conflict analysis¹ undertaken as part of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) programme funded by the Government of the Netherlands. The purpose of the report is to gain a better understanding of the underlying causes of conflict at the national, subregional and community levels, and to identify formal and non-formal education programming that supports conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Methodology

The analysis began with a review of existing conflict analyses and peacebuilding strategies, including the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund conflict analysis (2009) and the Government of Uganda's Peace Recovery and Development Plan 2009–2012. Other analyses included the bottleneck analysis of Strategic Result Areas (2011) and the Uganda draft Mid-Term Review (2012).

The document review was followed by consultations with key stakeholders from four areas – Karamoja, the Acholi subregion, West Nile and the south-west – to identify sub-national conflict drivers and gain community perspectives on the conflicts affecting them. Stakeholders convened at a final workshop in Kampala to validate findings and identify programming suggestions for PBEA. For educators and peacebuilders alike, this provided an opportunity to position education within a larger framework and to recognize the transformative potential of education within peacebuilding agendas.

The PBEA programme, 2012-2016, seeks to build peaceful societies by strengthening the role of education in peacebuilding and integrating peacebuilding within the education system.



¹ Knutzen, Anna, and Alan Smith, *UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme: Uganda Conflict Analysis*, United Nations Children's Fund, October 2012

Context

Since gaining independence in 1962, Uganda has emerged as a regional leader with a strong national identity, and highly developed security and defence capabilities. It has done so despite numerous coups d'état, ongoing regional and tribal conflicts, dictatorial and often brutal leadership, and a 20-year civil war involving the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that left more than 1.8 million people displaced.

While overcoming enormous challenges, Uganda still exhibits some of the rifts, dichotomies and developmental disparities that have led to upheaval during the past decades. These include inter-communal divisions and tensions, the effects of instability in neighbouring countries, vulnerability to shocks, land disputes and unemployment. Simultaneously, new grievances have emerged, such as disparities in wealth and natural resource allocation.

As Uganda continues to recover from conflict and build social cohesion, putting strategies in place at the national, subregional and community levels to address security, political, social, economic and environmental challenges represents a pressing and promising opportunity for peacebuilding.

Underlying causes and dynamics of conflict

Through the conflict analysis, a number of conflict drivers were identified that could compromise Uganda's impressive track record towards stability. Where relevant, linkages between conflict drivers and education and learning have been identified, as outlined in the following lists.

SECURITY AND JUSTICE

- **Regional and national security concerns:** Uganda has established highly developed security and defence capabilities, implemented significant security sector reform, and taken an active role in security issues within the East African Community. Uganda's diversity of tribes and shared borders with five countries, however, leave it vulnerable to the influences of conflict in neighbouring countries.
- **Incomplete disarmament:** Continued efforts at disarmament, particularly in Karamoja, are challenged by the proliferation of arms from Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Kenya. Disarmament efforts have not always been proportionate, leaving some groups unable to defend themselves against raiders from other regions.
- **Unresolved issues of abuse/violence:** Despite the high value placed on stability, accusations of military abuses during the LRA war, disarmament in Karamoja, the 'pacification' of West Nile and claims regarding illegal resource extraction from the eastern Congo raise concerns regarding the legitimacy of police and military leaders and fuel perceptions of injustice.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

- **Political exclusion:** Despite efforts to diversify political party representation, there are ongoing concerns arising from the perception that some regions or groups, such as the Acholi or Karamajong, are politically marginalized, even at the local government level. This impacts leadership capacity and development and undermines national unity. Parallel political and cultural authority structures based on the restoration of historic kingdoms has also created division among citizens. Civil society groups, especially those vocalizing political opposition and raising contentious political and social issues, report increasing intimidation and obstruction of their activities.
- **Inequitable government service delivery:** There is a strong correlation between conflict-affected areas and underdevelopment of social services and infrastructure. Low development indicators, such as enrolment and completion rates in the education sector, are notable in the Acholi, West Nile and Karamoja subregions. Insecurity and lack of infrastructure have made government investments in education in these regions challenging. Problems of access have been compounded by difficulties in recruiting qualified, professional teachers to work in these areas. The low standard of service delivery and perceptions of favouritism towards the west were viewed as indicative of a greater marginalization of conflict-affected regions and an underlying source of grievance.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Inequitable economic development:** Despite the rapid pace of economic growth, population growth has outpaced economic progress. The slow trickle down of economic dividends presents significant challenges to peace. Disparities in wealth between urban and rural areas, and in the poorest regions of Uganda, perpetuate concerns regarding isolation, vulnerability, inequity and corruption. The majority of Ugandans depend on agriculture for employment, but adoption of improved technologies has been slow, and educators point to a lack of targeted skills in the school curriculum as one possible reason. At the same time, many young Ugandans aspire to highly skilled jobs such as engineering, information technology and medicine, and hope the Government will create employment opportunities for them.

SOCIAL ISSUES

- **Youth alienation:** Uganda has the youngest population in the world. As this demographic transitions to adulthood, their needs, values and perspectives will significantly transform Ugandan society. The youth unemployment rate is currently 83 per cent, and young people are frustrated by the lack of economic opportunities. The education system is perceived as not adequately preparing youth for future employment. Youth also expressed feelings of political marginalization and disengagement, particularly in rural areas where political opposition is the strongest. The combination of large youth populations, high unemployment and political marginalization could undermine the country's long-term stability.

- **Low capacity for reconciliation and peacebuilding:** Societal capacities for reconciliation and peace are defined as processes that take account of existing divisions within and among communities and support reconciliation processes. There is tension between traditional mechanisms, such as local elder or community authority structures, and state mechanisms for resolving disputes. Beyond dispute resolution, reconciliation will need to address reintegration of former combatants, diversity in political party representation, and further development of a cohesive national identity. For communities that have minimal positive contact with one another, schools present an opportunity for children to grow up side by side with members of neighbouring communities.
- **Social norms related to violence:** Recourse to violent forms of conflict resolution is common throughout Uganda. At the household level, this manifests in domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence, and violence against children. This culture of violence extends to the school environment, where physical and sexual abuse and corporal punishment are prevalent. This cycle of violence shapes the way children and youth understand and approach conflict throughout their lifetimes. In the absence of non-violent dispute resolution mechanisms, young people are likely to resort to violence unless they are equipped with alternative tools and approaches at a formative age

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- **Natural resource management:** Following the discovery of oil in Lake Albert, there are concerns, particularly among youth, regarding corruption, a lack of transparency in the administration of natural resources and the degree to which local communities will benefit from these resources. These concerns extend to other mineral wealth, such as gold in Karamoja, where access and oversight are challenging.
- **Land disputes:** Fuelled by displacement and lack of formal land titles, land disputes are a significant source of day-to-day conflict, representing 94 per cent of cases before local courts in the north.

Key conflict dynamics at the subregional and community levels

Karamoja

Located in the north-eastern corner of Uganda, Karamoja has some of the country's lowest development indicators, particularly in education. Lack of infrastructure inhibits school construction and maintenance for the dispersed and rural populations. Teacher recruitment and retention are challenging, with resulting high pupil-to-teacher ratios. Secondary school drop-out rates are high, especially for girls.

Due to poor quality and relevance of education, there is a rising sense among families that education is an investment that does not pay off. Drought and the lack of alternative livelihood opportunities have resulted in clashes over access to grazing lands and water, increasing the incidence of violent cattle

raids. Widespread polygamy has led to broader communal disputes over land, resources and inheritance. Alcoholism and domestic violence perpetuate a cycle of violence.

Acholi

The Acholi subregion, located in northern Uganda and bordered by South Sudan, is deeply scarred by the 20-year civil war with the LRA. The conflict disrupted school attendance and investments in education, and has led to lower education indicators across the board. The war has also left deep social, economic and mental health wounds. People in the subregion live in persistent fear, have seen a breakdown in traditional family structures, and are dealing with substance abuse and mental health disorders. Political marginalization of the Acholi by local and national government and lack of employment opportunities, particularly for youth, are a source of ongoing grievance. Land disputes due to prolonged displacement, polygamous marriages and lack of formal land titles have been a major source of community tension. These tensions have extended to school sites, where disputes over government appropriation affect community participation and ownership of schooling.

West Nile

The West Nile subregion is located in the north-western corner of Uganda and shares borders with South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. West Nile is host to a large population of South Sudanese/Sudanese refugees as well as repatriated Ugandan refugees, and is characterized by a transient population and lingering cultural and religious tensions. The subregion was also severely affected by the LRA insurgency and remains in close proximity to LRA activity, making recovery challenging. As with other subregions, conflict and protracted displacement have led to education being under-resourced. Education indicators are low, with West Nile's completion rate half the national average. The effects of camp life and a dependence on aid have made families unwilling to support their children's education and undermined a sense of community ownership.

South-western Uganda

The south-west of Uganda is marked by significant cultural, ethnic and economic diversity. There is a perception that this part of the country has benefited disproportionately from investments in infrastructure and service provision. Landholding remains inequitable and predominantly controlled by individuals with political connections. The area has also seen a large amount of in-migration from other parts of Uganda, leading to tensions and occasional violent clashes between native Banyoro and immigrant Bakiga. Large refugee populations from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have placed a strain on local resources and service provision. In the education sector, in addition to low literacy rates and lack of access to secondary education, the key challenge is to integrate a transient refugee population with psychosocial and language barriers.

The role of education in peacebuilding

Conflict has disproportionately affected children and youth in Uganda. Up to 60,000 children were abducted during the war, many of whom were used as child combatants or slaves. Many more were displaced and their education disrupted. Regional and district-level disparities in access to and quality of education are viewed as part of a broader marginalization of conflict-affected areas and are a significant conflict driver. Current education models are not well suited for pastoralist communities. The curriculum

does not adequately prepare youth for productive livelihoods or provide culturally relevant skills. A significant number of out of school youth have resorted to alternative income-generating activities, including petty theft, organized criminal activity and prostitution, which adds to youth alienation and disengagement. Teacher preparedness and willingness to discuss current events, address challenging and divisive issues in the classroom, and provide alternative mechanisms of conflict resolution remain a concern. Alcoholism and normalized violence, including violence and sexual abuse at schools, perpetuates the cycle of conflict at all levels.

Despite these challenges, education has enormous potential to help drive peacebuilding in Uganda. The restoration of education services can act as a peace dividend, signalling a return to normality and the ability of the state to provide services for the public good. Delivered sensitively, education can avoid fuelling inequalities and grievances or reinforcing prejudices and animosities. Education can help transform values, attitudes and behaviours that encourage non-violent ways of dealing with conflict and redress systemic and structural injustices.

Peacebuilding entry points in education and learning

Political and policy responses

- **Support curriculum implementation at the national level:** Support implementation of the newly revised curriculum through teacher training on peace education, life skills and psychosocial education to address underlying sociocultural drivers of conflict and replace them with values and skills in peaceful conflict mediation and negotiation at a critical age.

Structural reforms

- **Reduce disparities in education access and quality:** In conflict-affected areas, increase access to and retention in basic education that promotes peacebuilding and reconciliation.
- **Support refugee education:** Integrate refugee populations into the Ugandan education system, while addressing issues of citizenship, identity, integration and popular perceptions about refugees, particularly in Western Region.

Individual and interpersonal changes

- **Build community resilience to mitigate and prevent violence:** Engage adults and youth through community bazaars, youth groups, recreational and cultural programmes, and establishment of early childhood development centres to unite communities around common goals and strengthen their skills in non-violent conflict mediation and negotiation.
- **Engage children and youth through non-formal education:** Provide non-formal education programmes for youth that focus on livelihoods, vocational training, civic and citizenship education, and attitudes towards violence.
- **Address violence against children in schools:** Work with teachers and administrators to protect children at school, and develop enforcement, response and treatment programmes with local authorities to support child survivors of violence.