# THE SYNERGY BETWEEN GENDER RELATIONS, CHILD LABOUR AND DISABILITY IN THE POST-WAR ACHOLI SUB-REGION OF NORTHERN UGANDA

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i

## KEY WORDS

Acholi sub-region

Post war

Gender relations

Hazardous child labour

Disability

Status quo

Well-being

Social justice

# ABSTRACT

## THE SYNERGY BETWEEN GENDER RELATIONS, CHILD LABOUR AND DISABILITY IN THE POST -WAR ACHOLI SUB-REGION OF NORTHERN UGANDA

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Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Development Studies in the Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape.

After a war of nearly two decades in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda many families and communities were physically, socially, economically and psychologically devastated. A myriad of other concomitant effects of the war such as distorted gender relations in households and undue exposure of vulnerable children to the menace of hazardous child labour manifest in the communities today. A plethora of non-government organisations has worked in the Acholi sub-region trying to transform the communities after the war, but these challenges remain thus compromising social justice and the well-being of children. Although numerous studies have been conducted on the three constructs: gender relations, child labour and disability independently, they are studied concurrently in this study without prioritising any. The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of girls and boys aged 10-17 with various forms of physical disabilities involved in hazardous child labour in the post war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. This was achieved by examining the link between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in relation to the well-being of children in two selected districts that were the epicentre of armed conflict, namely Gulu and Nwoya. This study was guided by five specific objectives: Exploring how the nature of gender relations in households influence hazardous child labour; establishing how hazardous child labour relates to disability; exploring the impact of the existing social justice system on hazardous child labour; examining the well-being of children with disabilities involved in hazardous child labour; and exploring the perceived links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. The study employs a social science approach and a qualitative research design to fully understand the phenomenon of hazardous child labour as it applies to children of both genders with physical disabilities in a post-war context. Data were collected from purposively selected districts of Nwoya, and Gulu. The study targeted children with physical disabilities as primary participants and their parents and caretakers were key informants. Overall, 40 interviews were conducted from a total of 160 purposively selected study participants. Data were collected using focus group interviewss (32) and in-depth individual interviews (8), for triangulation purposes and observation. A total of ten children participated using the draw and write technique. Tape recording and note-taking were also employed. In particulat, the findings indicate a strong

connection between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability as a result of historical factors connected to the war. Chapter seven establishes that the realization of rights of children with disabilities remains a challenge in a post war environment where communities believe that children have to work for pay and contribute to family survival. In chapter eight, the study established that the three themes of gender relations, child labour and disability influence each other with a connection. It is evident that resource allocation is a result of decision making, which is a result of roles and responsibilities, emanating from cultural beliefs and practices, resulting from gender relations at household level. Gender inequality persists thus leading to gender-related injustices such as deprivation and exploitation of the girl child. The cultural belief that men and boys are superior in decision-making and resource allocation worsens the situation for girls and women thus their well-being is compromised. As well, the findings reflect that these three factors do stand independently as each connects to different cultural beliefs and practices that jeopardise the well-being of children.

# DECLARATION

I declare that *The Synergy between Gender Relations, Child Labour and Disability in the Post-war Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other University, and that all sources I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Rosemary Nakijoba                                            20th November, 2020
Student No.3700035

Signed:

# DEDICATION

To my late father Mr. Ssekiwunga John Baptist (Lion of Judah). Dad, you were such an exceptional parent and I will always have you in my heart. Rest in Eternal Peace.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

xiv

# LIST OF FIGURES

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS-Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

CAO- Chief Administrative Officer

CBO- Community-based Organisation

CBR-Community Based Rehabilitation

CEDAW- Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

HCL- Hazardous Child Labour

CRC- Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRC- Child Rights Club

CSOs-Civil Society Organisations

CRS-Catholic Relief Services

CWDs-Children with Disabilities

DET-Disability Equality Training

DHR-Declaration of Human Rights

DPOs-Disability People's Organisations

DRC- Democratic Republic of Congo

EMS- Economic and Management Science

FBO- Faith-based Organisation

FGI- Focus group interviews

GCD-Gender Child Labour and Disability

GR-Gender Relations

GUREC- Gulu University Research and Ethics Committee

HIV- Human Immuno Virus

HRBA-Human Rights Based Approach

ICC-International Criminal Court

IDP – Internally Displaced People

ILO- International Labour Organisation

IMDC- Intelligent Mobility Design Centre

IPEC-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

ISD-Institute for Social Development

ISRJ- Indian Streams Research Journal

LRA- Lord's Resistance Army

MFPED –Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

MoGLSD- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

NAP -National Action Plan

NGO- Non-government Organisation

NIHSS-National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences

NUWODU- National Union of Women with Disabilities

OVC- Orphans and Vulnerable Children

PSG -Parent Support Group

RANQ -Resources   and Needs Questionnaire

SBU-Small Boys Unit

SDG- Sustainable Development Goals

SGBV- Sexual Gender-based Violence

SPLA-Sudan People's Liberation Army

SSRC- Social Sciences Research Council

UBOS- Uganda Bureau of Statistics

UNAIDS-United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS

UNICEF-United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNDP-United Nations Development Program

UNCRC- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNCRPD- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

UNCST-Uganda National Council of Science and Technology

UNISE -Uganda National Institute of Education

UNDHR- United Nations Declaration of Human Rights

UNHS-Uganda National Household Survey

UPDA- Uganda People's Defence Army

UPDF-Uganda People's Defence Forces

USDC-Uganda Society for Children with Disability

USE-Universal Secondary Education

UWC-University of the Western Cape

WeD-Wellbeing in Developing Countries

WFCL- War Forces of Child Labour

WFP- World Food Programme

WHO-World Health Organisation

WV-World Vision

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Chapter introduction

This qualitative study examines the synergy between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability and the interaction of these phenomena on children with physical disabilities in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. Although a number of studies have been conducted on these variables, it has mostly been studied in isolation of each other (Marcia & Zuckerman 2009). The current study considers the three dimensions together without prioritising any of them.

This study was motivated by the many stories and horrid experiences of children coupled with multiple vulnerabilities witnessed by the researcher during the 18 years of community development work, albeit in a non-post-war context. Whilst conducting Disability Equality Trainings (DET) under the International Labour Organisation programmes mainly in Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia, between the years 2010-2015, the researcher became concerned about the need for specific attention to children with disabilities. The immense level of vulnerabilities of children singled out during the many years of training on disability were a tip of the iceberg; an indicator of possible indescribable experiences that children with disabilities may be facing during and after the war.

Furthermore, her academic and social work background defined the researcher's outlook and ambitions in life. The researcher has been deeply reflexive about the various positions she occupies as a development practitioner and a lecturer and what these positions make possible for her as well as others. The problems she observed made her to embrace ideas of being some one who contributes to development by transforming the lives of others especially the children with disabilities as well as their parents and caretakers that are renderd vulnerable in many ways. It is anticipated that the findings of this study shall be instrumental in conducting more methodical goal oriented research while changing the lives of the children with disabilities that are at the same time engaged in harzadeous labour in a post war context.

**Figure 1: Historical conflict areas in Uganda**

Former Uganda National Army (FUNA) 1980 - 1985

Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) 1980 - 1985

Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) 1980 -

National Resistance Army (NRA) 1981 - 1986

Uganda People's Army (UPA) 1986 -

West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) 1986 -

Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF) 1986 - 1987

Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA) 1986 - 1988

National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) 1986 -

Lords Resistance Army (LRA) 1988 -

Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) 1995 -

Shaded areas represent zones of insurgency and are not intended to denote definitive boundaries nor areas of control.

Maps | *15*

**Source:** *Adopted from ACORD, 2002*

The more than 20 years of a gruesome armed civil conflict in the Acholi sub-region between mid-1980's to 2007 was a genocide that affected the social fabric of society  to the

2

extent that today's generation of children have to fend for their survival (Mukasa, 2017:355). The United Nations named it the 'worst neglected humanitarian crisis' globally (Amone, 2007: 645; UNOCHA, 2005). Nearly the entire population was forced to live in squalid Internally Displaced People's Camps (IDPs) and protected villages (Mehus et al., 2018: 3; Cheney, 2005: 32; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:5-6). This affected gender relations since men were deprived of economic capital while women and children remained culturally confined to doing home chores. It should be noted that during the pre-war period, hazardous child labour seem to have been minimal and almost unnoticed because families prioritised formal education as they earned from farming and endeavoured to pay school requirements to keep children in school. The war caused poverty and many families had difficulty in fulfilling their fundamental needs. Therefore, in a bid to achieve some level of well-being, everyone had to work and make a contribution to family survival. Children too worked for cash and in-kind payment to ensure availability of food and other family necessities. I therefore agree that today's new generation of Acholi children are born in abject poverty (Kristen, 2005:32).

Consequently, survival in IDP Camps depended on hazardous child labour as children could work fast and earn through petty trading and from jobs such as collecting water from the boreholes for other families. Having a bigger number of children could have meant that the family benefited more as children engaged in many activities to earn some form of income for their families. Besides, there is no doubt that the war also resulted in an increased number of people with disabilities, as some of the preventable causes of disability were not attended to due to instability. There were also rampant cases of people who were affected by landmines. This most likely increased the vulnerability of children whose parents/caretakers acquired disabilities during the war. Children were also at risk for disability due to landmines as they moved to do various activities while those already disabled were at risk for more encounters, including being faced with social injustices.

**Figure 2: Political Map of Uganda during the time of armed conflict**
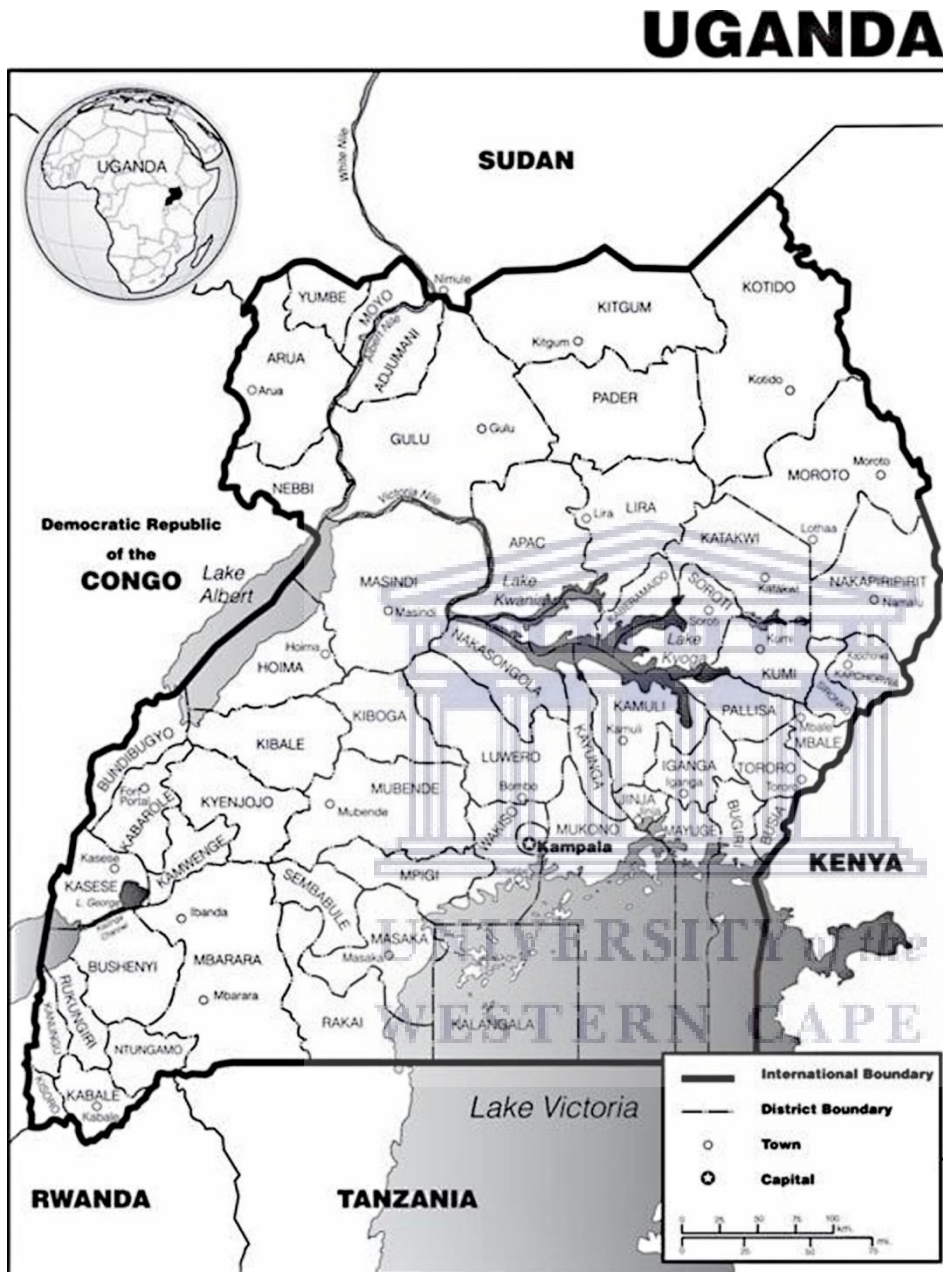


**Source:** *Adopted from Cheney, 2005: 26.*

The above background clearly demonstrates the devastating effects that the armed conflict has had on children. However, there is not much written about children and war in the Acholi sub-region to inform scholarly work, policy and community interventions. Most of what is heard regarding the ruins of war on children with disabilities appears to be rumours,

given the very limited documentation. This research was conducted with the next generation children of the victims who directly experienced the armed conflict in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. There is no doubt that these children are a current generation traumatised by the war experiences of their parents and caretakers (Mehus et al., 2018:5; Olema, et al., 2014). This generation of children has not had a chance to tell their story. The study therefore is an exploration of the lived realities of these girls and boys with physical disabilities and being involved in hazardous child labour. Moreover, with disability is enough trauma in itself and it is double trauma having to work as a child in order to earn for family survival. This notwithstanding, it is a triple tragedy being a child and very nasty for a girl to have an encounter with these life conditions in a post-war context such as that of northern Uganda. This study seeks to give a voice to these children.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is majorly to clarify on the study themes as situated, not only broadly, but also during and after the war context. This chapter also presents the academic gap and research questions for the study conducted in the war-affected Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda.

## 1.1.1 Northern Uganda

The study was conducted in Uganda, located in East Africa. The country is composed of four (4) major regions. Each region is then sub-divided into sub-regions. The Acholi sub-region is part of the northern region which also comprises of three other sub-regions namely; Karamoja, West Nile and Lango. The Acholi sub-region directly experienced over two decades of war compared to other sub-regions (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:69). Particular attention for this study was on the Gulu (urban) and Nwoya (rural) districts which were the epicenter of the armed conflict. The major camps such as Anaka and protected villages were also located in these two districts during the insurgency period. A study of the above three themes in the urban and rural contexts enabled the author to understand these phenomena as a whole.

### 1.1.2 Central themes

The next few paragraphs provide a summarised overview of the central themes for this study, namely gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. Detailed discussion will follow in Chapter Four. It is important to remember that these concepts are studied in combination without prioritizing any.

### 1.1.2.1 Gender relations

Gender relations form part of the broad notion of gender equality that accounts for how men and women, boys and girls are positioned in social relations, especially in terms of power to manipulate decision-making, resource control, utilisation and allocation at family, community or societal level. It has ancestry in the way culture defines identity, entitlements and tasks for mothers and fathers relating with one another, thus power relations (MoGLSD 2007:33). In situations of armed conflict, it is common to find men becoming redundant and resorting to products such as smoking and taking alcohol, leaving the responsibility of looking after families to women (Mehus et al., 2018: 5). Similarly, it is affirmed that the Apartheid experience in South Africa contributed significantly to deep-rooted gender inequalities by relying on women to sustain and fully be in charge of homesteads (Hall et, al, 2018:28). These experiences jeopardise family cohesion (Muzurana, Carlson, Blattman & Annan, 2008; Liebling-Kalifan et al, 2008). It is however, interesting to note that in some Acholi families, where mothers are absent, fathers sometimes help to fulfill the mother's roles (Mehus et al. (2018: 15).

Gender roles, family relations in post-conflict societies as well as family dynamics in terms of culture have a major role to play in promoting good gender relations in any community context (Olema, et al 2014; El-Bushra & Sahl, 2005). It is imperative for this study to specifically investigate the gender relations at household level in a bid to locate its interaction with hazardous child labour and disability to find its impact on girls and boys with disabilities involved in harzadeous labour in a post-war context of the Acholi sub-region in Uganda.

**1.1.2.2 Hazardous child labour**

The first step in understanding the concept of hazardous child labour is to define a "child". The concept "child"in this study partly borrows the definition of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995:7-13) and the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC). Article 1 defines a child as any person below the age of 18 (UN Convention, 1989:4: Mukasa, 2017:355; Uganda Constitution, 1995; African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child, 1990:2; Berman, G., et al., 2016:5). Although the Amendment (2016) to the Ugandan Children's Act, 1997 considers the minimum working age to be 16 years, this study also includes children aged 17 as they fit into the definition provided by the Ugandan Constitution (United States Department of Labour, 2017: 3; Amendment (2016:4) to the Ugandan Children's Act, 1997).

The term hazardous child labour is defined differently depending on context, age, culture and society (Admassie, 2002:254). In simple terms, hazardous child labour broadly refers to a situation where children offer their labour for payment in kind or cash while in risky life conditions physically, socially, mentally and psychologically(ILO Convention No.138). A number of scholars agree that research done on hazardous child labour shows a strong connection between hazardous child labour and adverse health effects (Abdalla et. al., 2018:2). Notably, the term hazardous child labour is contextualised as being intense in this study. It should be noted that in normal circumstances, especially in an African setting, children are not expected to work for payment. Instead, society expects them to help with very simple household chores such as cleaning the house, sweeping the compound, washing utensils; general but simple work for the good of their families. Thus according to Anumaka (2013:57), they are treated as half adults.

**Summary of hazardous child labour figures and implications**

A number of scholars has predicted increasing trends in hazardous child labour figures worldwide (Admassie, 2002:251; World Bank, 2018). World Bank estimates (2018) indicate 168 million children trapped in child labour. The total figure accounts for eleven per cent (11%) of the total population of children worldwide. One hundred million boys and sixty eight million girls are trapped in this menace and approximately half of the total numbers of children trapped in labour are in hazardous employment (World Bank, 2018). Although the number of child labourers has been reduced compared to the previous years' as there were two hundred and sixty-five million

child labourers in 2013 (ILO, 2017), it is still considered high. It is also important to note that despite significant advancement in eliminating hazardous child labour and recently approving the Amendment (2016) to the Ugandan Children's Act, 1997, which officially criminalises the vice, Uganda continues to have many child labourers between age 10 and 14 (UBOS 2014:29).This rate of hazardous child labour is a stumbling block to poverty reduction in Uganda (MoGLSD, 2016:33, UBOS, 2014:28). It is even more surprising that Uganda still officially counts children aged 14 and above among its working and employed populations (UNHS, 2018:47). This affirms that child labour is wide spread in Uganda. It includes children in rural areas that are aged 5-17 (Anumaka, 2013:55).

Fifteen percent (15%) of children in the Northern region of Uganda are said to have been involved in dangerous and harsh labour such as breaking gravels and prostitution in trying to fend for themselves and their families (Anumaka, 2013:56 ; Anyagarwal, 2009). According to MoGLSD (2016), the worst forms of hazardous child labour activities are where children are found working day or night, including carrying luggage, hawking, prostitution, crushing gravel and making bricks. Annan (2010) confirms that hazardous child labour normally increases after a war and consequently hampers development. These high incidences of hazardous child labour have resulted in increased social, economic and physical child vulnerability (Suarez, 2011; Von der Assen, Euwena & Cornielje, 2010; ILO, 2017).

**Table 1.1 Overview of children's work in Uganda by Sector and Activity**

| <u>Sector</u> | <u>Activities done by children</u> | |
|---|---|---|
| **Industry** | Manufacturing, including carpentry workshops and in steel rolling mills, | Quarrying stone* and mining gold, sand*<br><br>Construction, including making and laying bricks |
| **Agriculture** | Cultivating crops such as coffee, tea*, tobacco*,corn, sugar cane*, rice* as well as harvesting and acting as scarecrows in rice fields | Production of palm oil and vanilla<br><br>Fishing activities* for example catching fish, smoking and selling fish, loading boats* charcoal burning and carrying it<br><br>Cattle keeping |
| **Services** | Domestic work such as working in hotels,* bars* restaurants*video halls* and firewood collection for sale | Street work such as car washing, porters,*vending*, begging* scavenging*, collecting scrap metal and selling it |
| **Distinct worst forms of hazardous child labour** ** | Brick making, forced labour in agriculture, bars, begging, mining, cattle keeping, stone quarrying, street work, domestic work (each of these sometimes result in human trafficking. | Smuggling, sometimes as a result of human trafficking<br><br>Use of the production of pornography<br><br>Commercial sexual exploitation, especially as a result of human trafficking |

*Determined by Uganda National regulation on labour to be hazardous. This is also relevant to article 3 (d) of ILO C. 182.
** Hazardous child labour is understood as the worst forms of child labour such as that mentioned under Article 3 (a)-(c) of ILO C.182.

**Source:** *Adopted from MoGLSD, 2016*

This study focuses on the worst forms of hazardous child labour, namely children in agricultural labour, stone-quarrying and brick laying, most common in rural Acholi, and vending on streets mainly in urban trading centres of the two target districts. There is no doubt that due to these dreadful forms of labour, the well-being of children with physical disabilities remains questionable.

In light of the above background, it is important to explore how the hazardous child labour phenomenon started manifesting in African families. Some scholars affirm that the genesis of hazardous child labour in an African setting is traced in the household structure. In African families, it was vital for children to work in order to profit their extended family system and parents. Children had to work as a way of supporting themselves and family. They also worked in the name of accessing training opportunities in vocational learning, most especially in the rural setting. For example, Africa has a long account of children who are active in domestic and practical small-scale farming (Bass, 2004: 20).

On the other hand, Mervyn (2013: 518), affirms that in the Western world, hazardous child labour only became visible during the Industrial Revolution. A number of employers realised that it was easy to exploit children. It is sad to note that, despite existing laws, the menace of hazardous child labour exists in every sector of the informal economy and is widespread (Anumaka, 2013:55; Waghamode & Kalyan, 2013). It is geographically widespread and noted to vary according to gender, culture and age and possibly time. As seen above (World Bank, 2018; Abdalla et al, 2018:2), there are an estimated 168 million children under the age of 14 in child labour worldwide. Africa, Asia and Latin America have a bigger share in this, as 96% of the hazardous child labour cases occur there.

**Pressure for hazardous child labour**

Although some scholars such as Admassie, (2002:251) argue that little is known about the likely causes of the rise of hazardous child labour in Africa, others note some of the responsible factors. However, these may differ by context such as war and non-war environments. Firstly, most children, especially in Africa contribute to household income either directly or indirectly or in both ways (Admassie, 2002:253). This happens irrespective of whether they have been affected by insurgency or not. However, the occurrence of war fuels the trend as we will note in the subsequent

paragraphs linking hazardous child labour to war. In some families, it is a cultural practice to teach children by letting them work to contribute to housework. Some of these children still continue to benefit from education as they work (Mervyn, 2013; 519). For example, in the Ganda culture/ tribe, girls in particular are subjected to work as part of their education process; training them to become responsible adults. In the process, many children continue with school, especially if family finances allow. Some cultures in Africa seem to share a similar trend. However, this does not rule out the fact that hazardous child labour occurs widespread and affects children's education. According to Bass (2004: 4), the menace of hazardous child labour is much higher in Africa.

On the other hand, in many situations children may be coerced to work for payment. Some families may deliberately send children to work in order to earn a wage in an industry or market context as a way of contributing to family survival at the expense of their education. More so, poor families can hardly afford the school requirements (Roggero et al, 2007). Indeed, this concern is similar to that of Dillon and the ILO who affirm that children's labour is seen as a vital way of increasing income among poor households (Dillon, 2008; ILO, 2017). Surprisingly, according to Bass (2004: 1), hazardous child labour is accompanied by assorted blessings as it enables children to eat. This kind of argument reduces children to 'eating beings' as if the only right they enjoy is access to food.

It is therefore not surprising to find that many of the African children who are in paid work toil for survival not only for themselves but for their large extended families. While in labour, children are faced with many challenging situations. For example, it is quite dehumanising when children are exploited by working for long hours and paid less (Adamassie, 2002: 253) which is not equivalent to the labour they offer (Mervyn, 2013:157). Shockingly, some children may not even be paid at all while others may be paid in kind with items such as sugar, soap in the name of replacing some of the energy lost during labour. It is shocking when children specifically girls are found in hazardous work. This puts their lives at risk while missing their right to protection from all sorts of exploitation such as economic and sexual exploitation (Abdalla et al., 2018:8).

While this study is of vital importance, there is no doubt that in the process of data collection, certain encounters were very emotional for the author as anticipated prior to field work. A researcher who is exposed to traumatic experiences of this nature needs to ensure that she is

empathetic. One needs to imagine how it feels to be a child in that situation; well aware that life may not change much even as a child matures into a young adult and beyond.

Secondly, a number of scholars agree that the socio-economic and political environments where children reside seem to be a major contributing factor that accelerates and makes hazardous child labour persistent (Von der Assen, Euwena & Cornielje, 2010; Adamassie, 2002:253). Child involvement in armed conflict is haunting and remains the most worrying form of hazardous child labour. Child soldiers worked to abduct fellow children, involving massive killings, burning and looting of property among other atrocities (Cheney, 2005:37; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:8). Children were indoctrinated and their only expectation was payment to be earned from their labour through the killings. Meanwhile, many Acholi people lamented that their own children were killing them (Cheney, 2005:32; Klasen et al., 2010:1096). Factors such as poverty, the growing levels of orphanhood and food insecurity cannot be underestimated for the havoc they cause in accelerating hazardous child labour and are common development challenges during and after a period of war (Abdalla et al., 2018: 2; Anumaka, 2013:56). War and poverty are birds of the same feather. As people get deprived of their source of income due to war, they tend to look for means of survival and involve children as active participants. Mervyn (2013: 158) claims that when poverty levels are too high and there is no hazardous child labour, the end result is starvation. This is put forward as one of the reasons why families involve their children in labour for payment in kind or cash. In countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Liberia, and Uganda, hazardous child labour was fueled by armed conflict (Amao & Akinlade, 2014); an obstacle to achieve long-term national goals (Braddock & Parish, 2013).It is important to keep in mind that this study is focused on children in a post-war context. Exploring the nature and impact of the hazardous child labour factor is imperative in order to inform us how it interacts with other central themes in this study to impact on children in a post- war context of this nature.

**1.1.2.3 Disability**

According to the WHO (2009) and Kaplan (2000), the disability concept can be traced from human history in the 19th and 20th centuries. In most societies around the globe, children with any type of disability are perceived to be "abnormal" and different from "normal" children. The word normal is implied for able-bodied children while abnormal is used to refer to children with various forms of disabilities. Such disability forms include physical impairment, cognitive impairment, sensory impairment, mental illness, intellectual impairment, and a mixture of variety of chronic diseases (WHO, 2018). The UN (2006:4) defines persons with disabilities to be those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on equal basis with others. The researcher concurs that disability is when the person has an impairment and experiences a barrier to do an activity. Thus, disability is equal to impairment together with barriers in the environment that hinder persons with disabilities from progressing as their non-disabled conuterparts. Impairment is used to refer to loss of a body function while the term barrier implies a limitation in the environment such as social, physical or attitudinal. This definition shows the multifaceted nature of disability. Society in northern Uganda through its cultural beliefs continues to disempower children with physical disabilities by involving them in petty work to earn for their families rather than investing in their future to enable them to contribute to meaningful societal development at a later stage. This also affirms the World Health Organisation's understanding of the concept as a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of a human being or group of people (WHO, 2018).

**Statistical Overview on Disability**

Today, the World Health Organisation estimates that there are approximately six hundred million people with disabilities around the globe. Eighty percent of these live in developing countries and majority are females in sub-Saharan Africa (WHO, 2018).

The 2017 Uganda Functional Difficulties Survey (UFDS) reflects that seven per cent (7%) of children aged 5 – 17 live with a particular form of disability. Similarly, four per cent (4%) of children aged 2 - 4 and seventeen per cent (17%) of adults aged eighteen and above live with a disability (UBOS, 2018:16). This seems to suggest that disabilities not found in children under

four years of age are acquired which also suggests hazardous conditions. Although there is no specific figure reflecting physical disability across all age groups, this study gives particular attention to children with physical disabilities in the Acholi sub-region. Such physical disabilities include epilepsy, dwarfism, albinism and physical deformity, including a missing limb. A number of children in the sub-region are noted to get sick or injured while working (UBOS, 2018; 16). The Uganda Bureau of Statistics highlights the number of males injured during hazardous child labour to be slightly higher than that of their female counterparts (UBOS, 2013). However, it is also important to remember that some children may have entered hazardous child labour when already with a disability while others were born disabled. This study considers children with disabilities irrespective how the disability was acquired. Given the vulnerability of children with disability, it is pivotal for this study to explore how the interaction of disability, gender relations and hazardous child labour impact on children in a post-war context of the Acholi sub-region.

## 1.2 The gap in the literature

In summary, after the two-decade war between the Lord's Resistance Army rebels and the Ugandan government, the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda remains a major development challenge. Moreover, even though some studies have been conducted on the focus themes of this study, each has been studied in isolation. There has not been much attention on the post-war context. Hardly any documentation exists on the synergy between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability with regard to children in a post-war context. The current study addresses this gap pointing particularly to the experiences of children with physical disabilities. The voices of these children are significant in this gap – both in academia and development work. Children attach meaning to their lived experience regarding the three study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. In addition, although the war resulted in multiple vulnerabilities, its impact on the current generation of children whose parents and caretakers directly experienced the armed conflict remains undocumented. The vulnerabilities seem to continue to worsen and may be more severe among children with physical disabilities who may also be denied social justice thereby having their economic and socio-cultural well-being compromised. Very limited research exists that specifically conducted that targets children with

physical disabilities who are involved in harzadeous labour informally. The current study attempts to fill this gap.

The study further questions how gender relations relate to hazardous child labour and disability to impact the well-being of children in a post-war context, not only to fill the academic gap but also to inform policy and programming in a post-war context.

Some scholars have specified that gender relations are distorted in a war context and affirm the likelihood of hazardous child labour being fueled by armed conflict (Roggero et al, 2007). A number of families are in a poor economic state in the Acholi sub-region, exposing children to undue hazardous child labour and exploiting children at the expense of their education. Indeed, this is in line with Dillon, (2008; ILO, 2017; Togunde & Carter, 2008; Roggero et al, 2000) who argue that children's labour is seen as a vital way of increasing income among poor households. The Acholi sub-region is noted to have the highest number of child labourers in Uganda as well as children with disabilities (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2014). This study examines the synergy between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability without prioritising any. Parents and caretakers were interviewed on the pre-war and war era to give context to the present.

## 1.3 Research questions and study objectives

The study is guided by five research questions, namely:

- What is the nature of gender relations in households with working children with disability?
- What is the relationship between hazardous child labour and disability post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda?
- What is the impact of the existing social justice system on hazardous child labour in post-war Acholi Sub-region of northern Uganda?
- How is the well-being of children with physical disability in post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda?
- What are the perceived links between gender, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda?

This leads us to the general objective. The main aim of the study is to examine how gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability influence each other to impact on the well-being of children in the post-war Acholi sub-region. The specific study aims are:

1. To explore the nature of gender relations in households of working children with disability.

2. To establish how hazardous child labour relates to disability in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda

3. To explore the impact of the existing social justice system on hazardous child labour in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda

4. To examine the well-being of children with physical disabilities in the -war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda.

5. To explore the perceived links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda.

## 1.4 Scope of study

The scope of this study is sub-divided into four major areas, namely geographical scope, content scope, time scope and population scope.

### 1.4.1 Geographical scope

The study was carried out in the Gulu and Nwoya districts located in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. Gulu district is located 337 kilometres (209 mi) from Kampala city centre on Masindi Road while Nwoya district is located 65.8 kilometers (40 mi), on Gulu-Arua road from Gulu town. Nwoya was part of Gulu district before the two were split into their current status. Gulu district is mainly in an urban setting with a municipality while Nwoya is mainly in a rural setting. The two districts were purposively and strategically selected for this study having been the epicentre for the armed conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. The major highly populated settlement camps such as Atiak were located in these areas. Additionally, Gulu and Nwoya have large numbers of children involved in hazardous child labour most of whom are orphaned and vulnerable. Although specific data on disability seem to be scarce in general, and mainly obtainable only every six years of the population census, the number of children with disability is high. Furthermore, the Acholi sub-region remains the poorest compared to other regions in Uganda (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2014).

**Figure 3: Map of Uganda showing the Acholi sub-region**
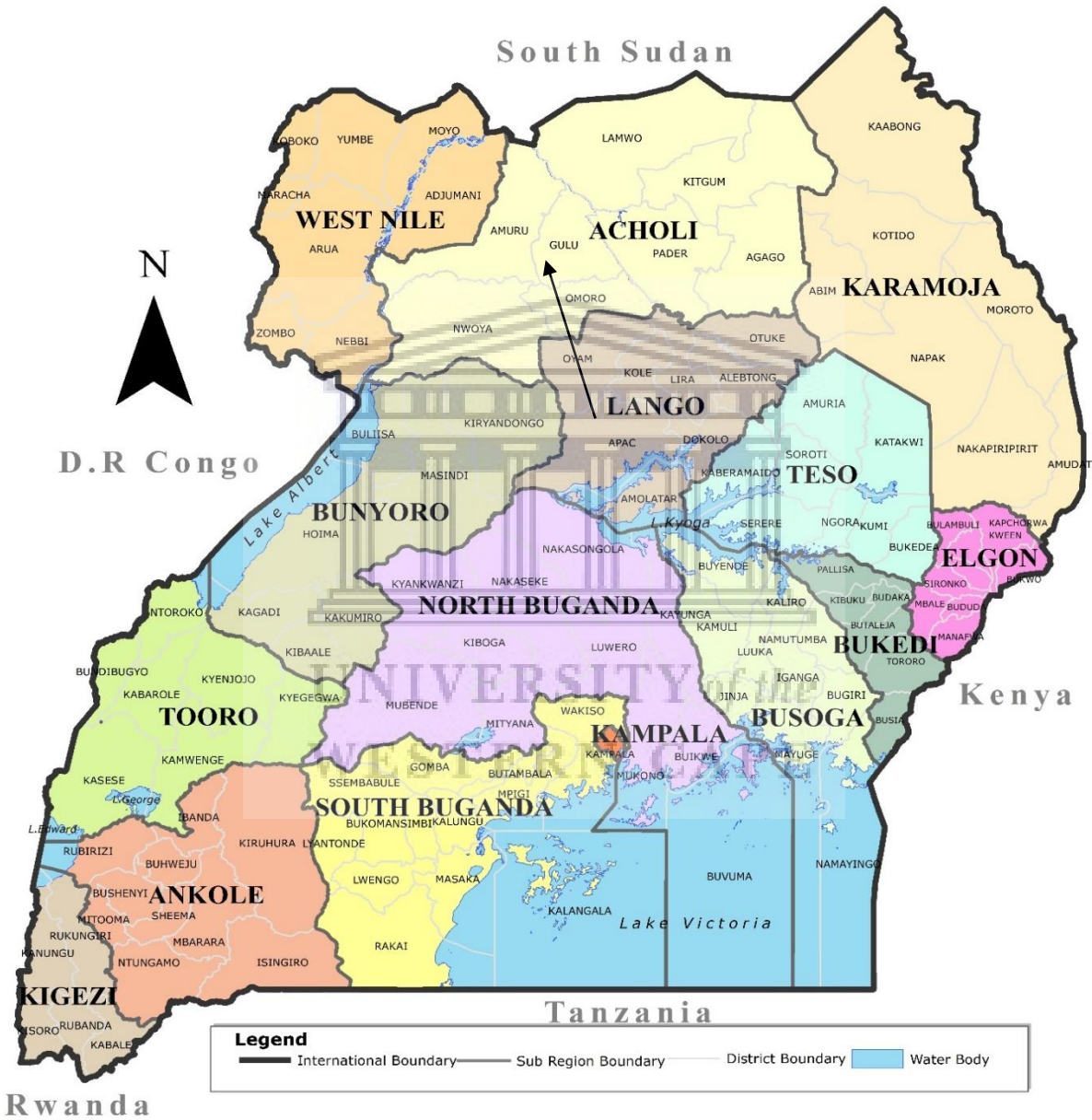


**Source:** *Adopted from UBOS, 2017*

### 1.4.2 Content scope

The study focuses on examining the synergy that exists between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability to impact the well-being of children in the post-war Acholi sub-region. This sub-section presents a brief overview on the background of the study concepts that are detailed in Chapter Four.

Gender relations aspects are normally centered on the relationships between women and men, girls and boys at household level, roles and responsibilities of family members, resource control, utilisation and allocation and decision making. In this study, gender relations are used to refer to how the interaction in terms of roles and responsibilities, decision making and access to resources between men and women, boys and girls at household level may be driving factors into hazardous child labour affecting children with physical disabilities.

Children's work that does not affect their health and development as well as work that does not hinder their education are considered as positive and acceptable in society. This includes helping their parents do work at home. Other activities not reasonable to hazardous child labour may include those that provide children with experience, skills and attitudes aimed at preparing them as productive and useful members of society during adult life. Such work is meant for a child's development and welfare. It is not in any way equated to hazardous child labour. Therefore, this study considers hazardous child labour as work that is laborious and tough for children, dangerous to their health/exposed to serious hazards or illness, being paid in cash or kind, faced with exploitation, left to fend for themselves on the street, on farms, and in factories among other examples. In most cases children may be separated from their families and work long hours. Such hazardous child labour is considered negative and unacceptable in society.

On the other hand, the study considers children with disabilities and sees the child first but not the disability. This is for purposes of avoiding stigmatisation. This study limits itself to children with physical disability as highlighted in the inclusion and exclusion criteria in this very chapter under sub-section 1.4.4. The physical disability was diagnosed through the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability. Children with physical disabilities such as epilepsy, dwarfism and deformity of any body part were considered as long as they had previously lived with this condition for over a one year period.

Primary data was intended to generate information looking at how the nature of gender relations in households interacts with hazardous child labour and disability to impact the well-being of children. The study content was extended to the pre-war and war eras to give context to the present.

It is important to be clear on what is meant by well-being. Gasper (2010:22) conceptualises well-being to mean quality of life (QoL), subjective well-being (SWB) and happiness. The terms QoL and well-being are often associated with each other given the two distinguishable and distinctive aspects, namely objective and subjective dimensions (Rapley, 2003). While QoL is sub-divided into spheres namely objective and subjective, Gasper (2010:351-360) and Camfield and Skevington (2008) note that well-being can be used more explicitly as it has multiple sub-divisions. Scholars such as Bowling et al., (2003: 269-306) note that QoL is often applied when describing how people feel at a given stage in their life in relation to their present life condition. Whilst, well-being is observed to have a solid philosophical aspect that separates it from conceptualisation of QoL (Gasper, 2010:351-360; Camfield and Skevington, 2008). Moreover, according to Ryan and Deci (2001), well-being is often used interchangeably with SWB yet the ideas of each differs. The latter (SWB) comprises of three facets including lack of undesirable mood, presence of positive mood as well as life satisfaction (Fabiola: 2013). The former (well-being) consists of a number of inter-related domains (Ward et al., 2012). SWB is extensively recognised as the primary index of wellbeing (King, 2007). The same author further notes that SWB is amalgamated within the broader umbrella concept of well-being in order to understand how people assess their overall life satisfaction. The focus of this study specifically relates to well-being with particular attention to children with physical disabilities and who are simultaneously involved in hazardous child labour.

Field (2009:5) narrates that well-being is historically aligned to happiness and health which are aspects controlled by individual persons. This makes the well-being theory useful in this study with a focus on resources, life experiences, and relativity socially and economically. It is essential in examining the lives of individual children experiencing harzadeous labour and at the same time with physical disabilities. Although well-being is often used to underpin social services, Bache and Reardon (2016) note that there has been a rising curve in the last decade regarding investigations carried out using well-being theory within the social, political and academic discourse. Cohen Kaminitz (2020) concurs, based on the increased number of investigations

carried out on well-being. Further research is required on well-being of families in a political discourse; an aspect that necessitates more space than this thesis can provide and is worthy of a thesis on its own.

Zoller, Albert and Cochran-Smith (2000) affirm that little research has been done with regard to the concept of social justice and that the subject is often contextualised to vary from one context to another, although some similar approaches are noted. Amid the varying definitions, Bell (2006) refers to it as a goal and process of ensuring that individual, cultural and institutional oppression is analytically observed. The equal sharing of resources, empowerment and social responsibility is therefore vital. In this study, social justice is used to refer to fair treatment and consideration of children with physical disabilities as they engage in harzadeous labour. The study questions whether such children are not faced with any form of exploitation and whether their communities and families are exercising social responsibility and observing their rights in the post-war working environment. Below is an illustration of the conceptual contribution of the study.
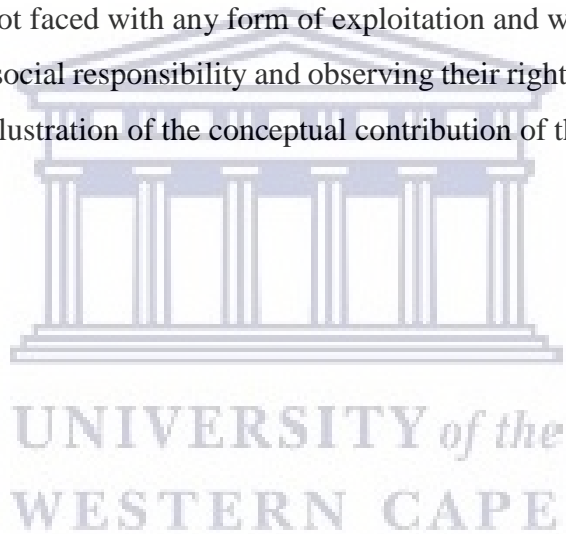
**Figure 4: The Conceptual Empirical Contribution of the Study/ Framework on Gender relations, Hazardous child labour and disability**



- War/armed conflict
- Lost family cohesion

Social justice

Gender relations, hazardous child labour & disability

Well-being

Marginalisation

Identity

Cultural beliefs and practices

Economic

Social

Physical

Hazardous child labour

Disability

21
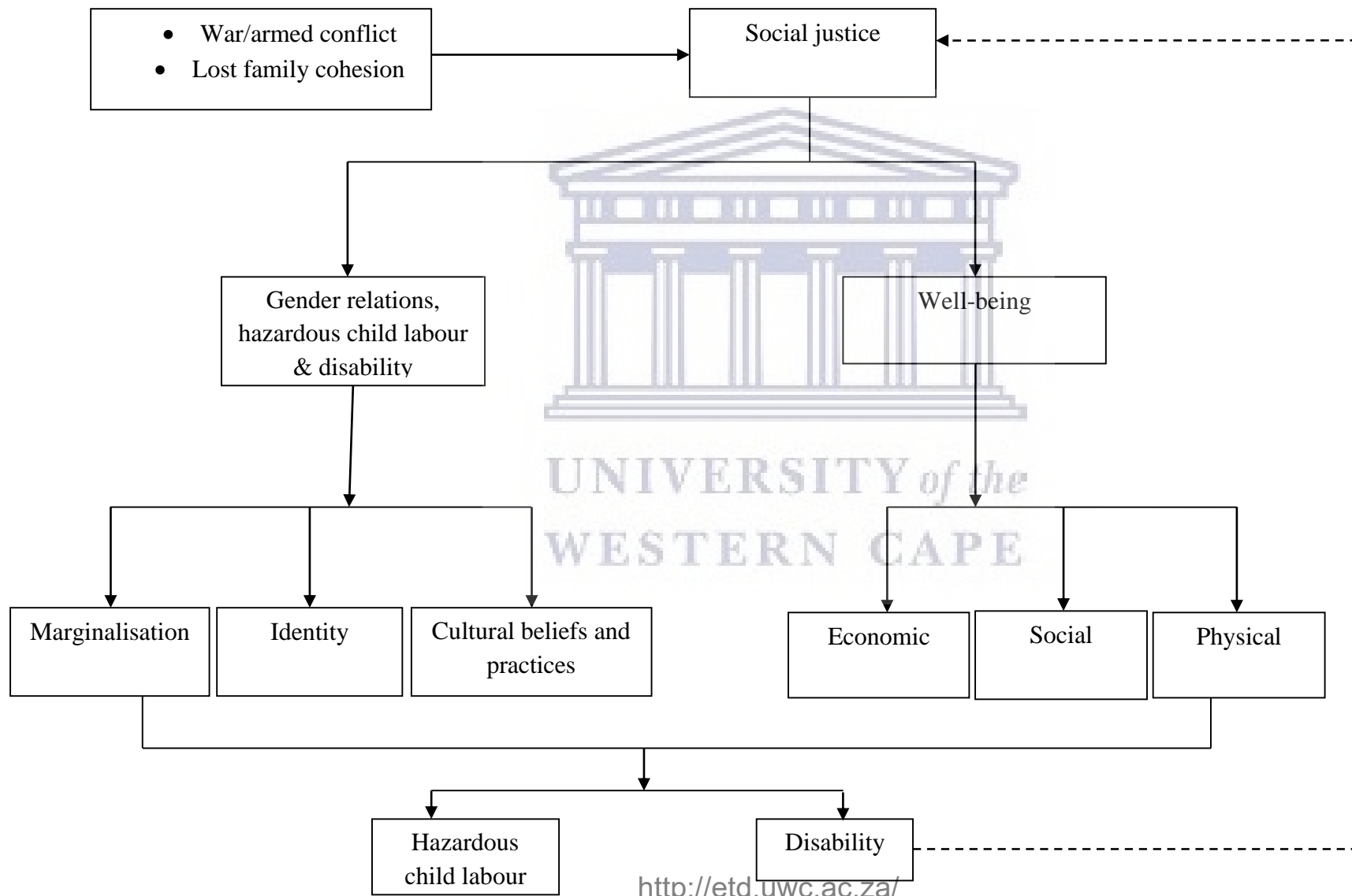
**Source: Author (2018)**

Figure 4 above reflects the conceptual framework – one of the empirical contributions of the study. The breakdown of family structures as a result of the war in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda led to the disappearance of social justice. Family cohesion was antagonised amid poor gender relations. This seemed to compromise the well-being of children physically, economically and socially as evidenced today with the current generation. Poor gender relations may lead to marginalisation, loss of identity as well as strong ties on cultural beliefs and practices related to gender and disability. As a result, the already vulnerable children, especially the girl child was forced and became trapped in hazardous child labour amid with a physical disability. A possibility exists that if these issues are addressed social justice could be regained thus achieving well-being of children.

### 1.4.3 Time Scope

The nearly 20 years of gruesome armed conflict in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda between the LRA and Ugandan government happened between mid-1990 up to 2005. This study is confined to a period of three years, namely 2017 to 2019. The selected period fits within the timeline when most families have settled back in their original home areas from Internally Displaced People's Camps. This three-year period was ample time to accomplish all the planned activities of the study including data collection, analysis, report writing and validation of findings.

The study targeted working children with disability aged 10-17 years because they are considered to be above the minimum working age (ILO, 2017). These are a current generation of children trauma

tised as a result of their parents/caretakers directly experiencing the war. These children were born after the war that ended in late 2005 and after the signing of the end of Hostilities Agreement with the Ugandan government in 2006. During and after the war, a number of NGOs flocked the Acholi sub-region to support the work of the Ugandan government. Projects such as rehabilitation, counselling and livelihood programmes were initiated. Uganda, together with other development partners, started the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund programme (NUSAF) with projects for agricultural development. A number of women were also mobilised and formed Self-Help Groups in order to promote a saving culture to meet their basic needs and those of their families. The

government of Uganda re-opened schools to offer Universal Primary and Secondary Education to children of school-going age. Health facilities, both government and private also re-opened with multiple programmes such as HIV/Aids care and support, immunisation and treatment. Although government interventions are supplemented by the work of NGOs, the need is overwhelming. Surprisingly, some non-government organisations have also closed and left the area. There are still gaps related to gender, hazardous child labour and disability issues. This study intends to inform policy, programming, implementation and more importantly, academia with regard to the plight of children with disabilities.

### 1.4.4 Population Scope

The inclusion and exclusion criteria in the study are as follows:

**Inclusion criteria**

- Working children with physical disabilities both girls and boys aged 10 – 17 engaged in hazardous child labour reached through purposive sampling technique; some of them have epilepsy and other types of physical disabilities even when with a mix of these and have lived with it for not less than one year. Working children found in agricultural hazardous child labour, sand mining, stone quarrying and petty trade.
- Disabled and non-disabled parents/caretakers with disabled working children were only considered as parents /caretakers.

**Exclusion criteria**

- Children who were hazardous child labourers during the war and are now adults at the time of the study;
- Children who do not have any form of physical disability and are at the same time not engaged in any form of work that involves money;
- Children with either hearing or intellectual impairment or both;
- Children with multiple forms of disability including any form of hearing or intellectual disability' and
- Children that are below age 10.

## 1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study employs two theories to analyse the findings, namely the well-being theory as primary and the social justice theory as an additional approach. These two theories complement each other and can both be used to analyse gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. Without social justice, society can hardly become a system of mutual cooperation that we desire. Therefore, achieving well-being of children in developing countries such as those affected by armed conflict remains a big dream. Further discussion on this is in Chapter 5 that details the theoretical framework.

## 1.6 Significance of the study

The study contributes to the body of knowledge as well as policy-making concerning working children with physical disabilities in Uganda. It also enriches the designing of an evidence-based intervention model to be implemented in critical awareness campaigns on the links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in Uganda. The study also contributes to understanding children in post war-affected communities better and informs relevant evidence-based interventions.

The study findings should also be useful in redirecting the meagre available resources to cater for children under such circumstances. This shall be achieved when all relevant institutions and organisations realise the importance of proper budget allocation to the vulnerable and most marginalised children in war and post-war situations.

In addition, the study highlights effective practices and processes for addressing hazardous child labour and disability challenges regarding children with physical disabilities in a post-war context. In this case, findings have been instrumental in proposing an inclusive intervention model for vulnerable working children with disability to be implemented by development partners such as the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, organisations focused on working children, children with disability (CWD), Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) among others.

The research findings bridge the paucity of information gap on the three study variables of gender relations at household level, hazardous child labour and disability, especially in post-war context. This will hopefully be achieved through submitting papers for publication to various peer-reviewed journals aimed at information sharing on the existing link between the three dimensions. Other countries that have experienced war/conflict may draw lessons to benefit their interventions.

## 1.7. Methodology and Ethics of the Study

This is purely a qualitative study that employs mainly individual interviews, focus group interviews (FGI), the draw and write technique, observation and note-taking to achieve the major aims.

### 1.7.1 Participatory Technique

The research was participatory in nature as participants showed a sense of collective will and solidarity during the focus group interviews. They ably analysed their lived situation and explained the key issues. The study employed a qualitative approach and all interviews were transcribed. This helped to generate information on how the participants of the Acholi sub-region understand gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in their post-war context; and more so the perceived links between the three study variables. Study findings were used to design problem-posing materials, including picture codes and a skit that were employed in verifying these study findings. These were employed on two focus groups for analysis and discussion during the dissemination of findings workshop. This whole process raised consciousness among the study participants who were then positioned more realistically to read their situation, conscientise other community members and together find possible alternative solutions to the challenges they experience related to the study variables. This process simultaneously addressed some of the post-traumatic disorder as first level intervention hence minimised chances of extending the trauma and its symptoms to the next generation of children.

### 1.7.2 Ethics of the Study

Ethical approval for this study was sought from various institutions. First, it was obtained from the University of Western Cape from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Committiee. Secondly, from the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST) and reference was made to the National Guidelines for Research involving humans as participants. Thirdly, the Institutional Ethical Review Board (IRB) of Gulu University approved this study as part of the ethical procedures. Gulu University is located in the Acholi sub-region where this study was conducted. In each of the study districts, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer provided a letter introducing the researcher to Local Council leaders at village level where participants were accessed for interviews. It was necessary to obtain ethical approval at all levels in order to ensure the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all the study participants especially the children. All study participants signed consent forms. The parents and caretakers gave permission for their children to participate in the study. I kept ethical issues in mind as I was writing this dissertation and this will be continued as I disseminate information.

### 1.8 Organisation of Report

This report is organised in nine chapters. Chapter One focuses on a brief introduction and presents an overview of the central themes, the literature gap, an indication of the research questions and study objectives, study scope, inclusion and exclusion criteria of participants, and significance of the study. Chapter Two highlights the general historical background of war in the world and on the African continent. Chapter Three submits the impact of war on children in Africa and the associated vulnerabilities and also provides insight in children's experience of war while Chapter Four covers the literature review, providing a global perspective. Chapter Four also conceptualises the study themes in detail. Chapter Five presents an overview of the theoretical approaches employed in analysis and discussion of the study findings. Chapter Six provides an overview of the research design and methodology that the study employed in arriving at scientifically authentic findings. A qualitative approach is adopted with an ethnographic research tradition. Chapters Seven and Eight present the empirical findings and analysis. Specifically Chapter Seven presents general findings and those related to the social justice approach while

Chapter Eight specifically presents and discusses findings related to the well-being theoretical Approach. Chapter Nine presents reflections, conclusions and recommendations.

**1.9 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter presented background information with an overview relating to the need for understanding the synergy related to gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability and how these interact to impact the well-being of children in a post-war context. This chapter is fundamental as it scrutinises the magnitude and intensity of the problem, including the existent academic gap. It is important to note that as yet no studies have been conducted that addresses these three themes together. Moreover, many social issues interconnect with each other in post war communities thus hindering the well-being of children. This makes multivariate investigation more meaningful in addressing development challenges. The current study addresses the three concepts together without prioritising any. The connectivity of development challenges in the world today and in the post-war Acholi sub-region in particular means that this study can provide some indication as to how the different key dimensions under investigation can contribute to well-being assessment in a complex setting.

# CHAPTER TWO

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO ARMED CONFLICT

# IN UGANDA

## 2.1 Chapter Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the protracted armed conflict in Uganda, particularly pointing to the post-war Acholi sub-region where this study was conducted. The objective is to provide a broader picture of the context in which issues related to the study themes occur. It should be noted that although it took long for the international community to distinguish the northern Uganda armed conflict, it is described as the most multifarious, atrocious and longest running conflict on the African continent Spitzer and Twikirize (2012: 69). This chapter explores the causes of the armed conflict. The outcomes of armed conflict are briefly analysed as well as the key strategies employed by the country in ending war and promoting peace. Similar to Chapter Three, the work of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program that is based in the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University has been informative in discussing this chapter (Save the Children, 2018).

## 2.2 An Overview of Armed Conflict in Uganda

Tamashiro (2010:1) notes that of all regions in the world, Africa is one of those that have had the highest concentration of armed conflict while Save the Children (2018:14 and Richmond (2017:13) affirm a sharp rise of armed conflicts in Africa with high numbers of displaced people.

Uganda is a former British colony with an estimated population of 45.308,238 as of Monday, 25 March, 2019 (United Nations, 2019; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:9). There are four ethnic groups in the country, namely the Nilo-Hamites mainly in the north east and west; the Bantu-speaking group mainly found in the south; the Sudanic in the north western part of the country and the Nilotics in the north (Uganda Bureau of Statistic, 2014). The country has experienced a number of civil conflicts such as the anti-Amin rebellion and the Uganda-Tanzanian war (1971-1979), the Obote's retributive coup d'état against Idi Amin in 1979 and the Ugandan Bush War (1979-1986) (Nasongo, 2015:53). The latter brought the current President Museveni's government into power.

Seven violent government changes have occurred since the country's independence in 1962 with the least serving president being in power for less than a month. Similarly, since 1986 when the current government took over, the country has witnessed over eight armed conflicts that have had an impact on the well-being of citizens (Amone, 2007:641).

According to Cheney (2005: 25), the northern Uganda armed conflict is believed to have roots in the colonial period following the British colonial system of indirect rule in the country that was established through the 1890 treaty with the Buganda Kingdom (Nasongo, 2015:38). The colonialists involved local chiefs into the local government administration on behalf of the colonial rulers. These colonialists later left behind a profoundly divided society whereby political power and economic resources were accessed differently; besides manipulating and stereotyping (Nasongo, 2015:37).This might have resulted in greed for power by the different ethnic groupings of the different regions resulting in social injustices. In addition, Uganda's political and military power is also known to have ancestry in the northern region (Nasongo, 2015:47), because for the period prior to 1986, the then presidents and the army were mainly from the northern ethnic group (Acholi) but were later overthrown by Museveni's government that has been in power for more than 33 years now. Surprisingly, the incumbent is still interested in becoming president come 2021. Under the British Colonial Rule, the southern Bantu ethnic groups got recruited in civil service and their land was targeted for economic development while the Nilotic ethnic groups of northern Uganda were recruited for leadership responsibilities in the police and the army (Cheney, 2005:25; Kasozi, 1994:7; Kwasi and Collier, 2005:258).This was evident since independence under President Milton Obote in 1962 as they had limited economic opportunities. This implies that people of northern Uganda were skilled as fighters from the 19th century under the British.

**2.3 Synopsis of Armed Conflict in Northern Uganda**

Between 1990 to about 2005, the Acholi sub-region located in the northern part of Uganda bore the brunt of a gruesome armed civil conflict for nearly 20 years. This conflict was between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda. It began in 1986 after a military government dominated by Ugandans from the northern region was overthrown by the National Resistance Army (NRA) headed by current President Yoweri Museveni (Amone, 2007:642). It should be noted that this was a continuation of the war that overthrew the Obote government and that saw President Tito Okello Lutwa briefly in power in Kampala when the current Museveni's government took over. It was during this time that President Museveni's regime continued to consolidate his position upcountry (northern Uganda).

When this armed conflict started, the army officers from the northern region fled back home while others crossed to Sudan (Amone, 2007:642). Museveni's army then met resistance from those who fled back home and others who had fled from being soldiers or from previous governments defeated in 1988 (Acholi guerrilla forces) such as the late James Ochola and Eric Owor. Former soldiers such as these formed a rebel group known as Uganda People's Defense Army (UPDA) (Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:9). Joseph Kony the most prominent figure in the northern Uganda war was a recruit of UPDA. However, after two years of fighting, in 1988, the Ugandan government signed a peace agreement with UPDA but some members of UPDA such as Joseph Kony and others remained dissatisfied (Amone, 2007:64; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:12). Kony then decided to start his own movement with a religious philosophy as a priest. Meanwhile, the UPDA continued with the military aspect and later decided to join the Uganda National Resistance Army (NRA) in a peace talk and advanced for peace (Cheney, 2005:26). This saw Kony and his rebels remaining in the bush alone without the UPDA. At a later stage, the Kony faction and UPDA started to fight each other. Then Kony's faction remained the only rebel group that people of northern Uganda relied on as a solution for their security Many of the northern-based guerrillas gathered under him as he was the so-called '*spiritual leader'* who thought he would continue to fight in order to emancipate the Acholi that had already suffered multiple armed conflicts for many years (Nasongo, 2015:61). Joseph Kony chose some Acholi veterans and formed the 'Lord's Resistance Army" (LRA) rebel group (Nasongo,2015:62; Blattman & Annan,

2010; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:10).This resulted in an armed conflict in the Acholi sub-region that lasted even longer than other wars experienced by the country.

Kony then connected to Dr. Riac Reik Machar and Rasan Turabi. The latter was Minister of Foreign Affairs in South Sudan while the former was President. It was easy for Joseph Kony to connect to these leaders because at that time, the SPLA of the South Sudan regime and the Ugandan army were at war with each other (Amone, 2007:643). The Sudan regime used Kony to help fight their war with the Ugandan government thus displaying the role of neighboring countries in accelerating or ending armed conflict (Kwasi and Collier, 2005: 261). Kony therefore became stronger given his new allies (Amone, 2007:644). At this stage, it is important to remember that this is still the same war that overthrew president Obote and saw the current government on the throne. It just changed form and much of it involved dramatic military tactics where Kony's rebels also set guidelines through militarism, Christianity, and Acholi animist religion (Cheney, 2005:25) in a bid to fight the Ugandan government.

It is also important to remember that war continued right up to northern Uganda because the National Resistance Army (NRA) still pursued the people they overthrew and tactics such as those demonstrated by the Kony rebels kept changing. As a result, the uprising of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was more of a reaction or response when the NRA was consolidating its power. Spiritualist Alice Lakwena raised a holy army from the Acholi soldiers at the time when the current president Yoweri Kaguta Museveni took over power in 1986 (Cheney, 2005:26; Veale, and Stavrou 2003:10). In the same year Alice Lakwena formed the Uganda's Holy Spirit Movement. This was a group of soldiers that represented the Acholi who felt that they were underrepresented after the overthrow of Milton Obote, the northern leader by Yoweri Museveni. Lakwena, at this point in time, persuaded the Acholi soldiers that their bodies would be bullet proof if smeared with shea nut butter (Nasonga, 2015:59). This imbued purity which also meant abstinence from alcohol and sexual intercourse. They also had to be cleansed and introduced to new techniques of fighting (Nasonga, 2015:59). This enticed them to fight fearless battles against the National Resistance Army (NRA).Interestingly, months after being into the battle, the NRA crushed the then 27 year old Alice Auma Lakwena's movement. (Nasongo, 2015:58).

Lakwena's distant cousin named Joseph Kony and other ritual assistants of the time claimed that they had inherited her powers and remained in the bush with another group of soldiers.

It is at this time when Kony and his small team of followers started harassing civilians and conflicted any government mechanisms. Kony then assumed Lakwena's holiness, engaged in sophisticated rituals, strictly followed particular rules and formed the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). He declared that his rebel team would overthrow Museveni and run the Ugandan government by following the Ten Commandments (Nasongo, 2015: 61; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:16 ). Joseph Kony used Bible verses to explain why it was important to kill the people of Acholi, who in his view, had failed to support his cause; claiming that he got the instruction from the Holy Spirit. The people of Acholi land continued to decline their support to Kony because of superstition and vindictiveness (Amone, 2007:644). This enraged him further against his people (Cheney, 2005:26). Nasongo (2015:63) affirms that Kony and his rebels attacked fellow Acholi and abducted children claiming that they should fight for his cause instead of reporting him to president Museveni's military troops. A number of boys and girls were abducted. Some children were separated from their families while others were recruited as child soldiers. Some scholars explain how the use of child combatants is so common in African countries (Kwasi and Collier, 2005:261). As children, they suffered from the devastation of the economic, social, and educational infrastructure, besides that their fundamental rights were not being safeguarded (Anumaka, 2013:57; Blattman and Annan, 2010). It is noted that there was no social justice for children and it is clear that the well-being of children is not being prioritised in war situations. One wonders about the fate of children with physical disabilities whose movement is limited or even impossible during such disaster situations. They tend to loose touch with their parents and guardians in the process of displacement and are thus often not able to reconnect again.

Until the 1990s people were killed, raped, harassed in various ways and their properties such as poultry, goats and cattle were looted, especially in the Kitgum and Gulu districts (Nasongo, 2015:59-60; Cheney, 2005:35; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:13). The brutality experienced surpassed that of Yoweri Museveni's army. All these pointed to effects of massive violations (UNDP, 2013). The details regarding the effects on the northern Uganda war are discussed in Chapter Three. However, as time passed, Kony lost more power.

Today we see that the Acholi and Langi of northern Uganda are not in any influential decision-making position anymore but some still serve as army and police officers. They remain somehow economically disadvantaged besides being in lower ranks (Nasongo, 2015:48; Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2014). The current president and

majority of the people in influential leadership positions are from the western region of Uganda as opposed to a time when northerners were in power. The rest of the regions have had candidates make efforts to get to the presidential seat but with no success.

## 2.4 Hypothetical, Influencing and Sustaining factors of the Northern Uganda Armed conflict

This sub-section gives us an indication of the general factors that attempt to explain armed conflict. Such factors are multiple and may differ country by country or region by region (Nasongo, 2015:68; (Kwasi and Collier, 2005:79). The next paragraphs highlight some of the multivariate root causes of war in Uganda.

The colonial system of divide and rule seems to have been a causative factor (Kwasi and Collier, 2005:259). For instance, in Uganda, access to colonial power, manipulation and economic development left the country divided and this affirms how the legacy left by colonial powers continues to be felt to the present day in Uganda (Nasongo, 2015:46). The end result of this was the struggle for political power as evidenced by the many struggles in Uganda's history to the present day. For instance, since 1962 up to approximately 1971, Uganda's army was predominantly from the north until Amin overthrew Obote. Amin also attacked and killed many Acholi officers in the army, among other incidences (Nasongo, 2015:52). In 2009, tstruggle for power and land ensued between the ceremonial King of Buganda and the incumbent president. Riots rocked Kampala around the Kabaka's palace in Mengo and a number of people lost their lives in the process, including a young boy who was shot on the head while in the shop with his mother. These are just among thousands of incidences that have occurred in the history of Uganda (Nasongo, 2015:30-47).

Secondly, disputes over resources is another factor. The researcher terms it the resource factor when each group struggles to acquire resources for themselves (Nasongo, 2015:68; Kwasi and Collier, 2005:19). Resource distribution (jobs, infrastructure, schools) during the colonial period and the immediate post-independence period were key issues that brought the north-south divide and thus the emergence of the LRA conflict. In addition, ethnicity is a major factor. Nasongo (2015: 83) affirms that there was a major division between the northern and southern Ugandan tribes where each had a fear of being dominated by the other. The author explains how the current

president Museveni, Obote and Amin exploited ethnic differences in order to win support as presidents. Other common and immediate casual factors known include the movement of rebel forces to neighbouring countries, corruption, greed, bad governance, authoritarianism and struggle for power, weapon markets and refugee settlements, self-determination, poor approaches to local and national elections among others (Nasongo, 2015: 68; Brenger &Verdier-Chouchane, 2015:18; UNICEF, 2014:22, War Child Holland, 2013:34; United Nations, 2006:12; Prugl, 2003:11; Goldstein, 1999: 26).

In particular, the armed conflict in northern Uganda continued to be triggered by the need for self-defence. The former soldiers were overthrown as the current government came into power formed the UPDA force in order to resist and ensure self-defence but instead they were being collected one by one as the NRM government tried to consolidate its power.

More so, some individuals might have had personal interests as the war became more dynamic in nature which could have been aimed at overthrowing the Museveni's government if it were possible. Hence it was very easy for the Uganda People's Defense Army (UPDA) team to join government while those who remained in the bush joined the SPLA of South Sudan. So, to some extent personal interests have influenced armed conflict in northern Uganda.

Furthermore, armed conflict breeds fear among the masses. For instance, with the rise of Museveni during the northern Uganda war, the Acholi people feared destruction and genocide as well as extinction (Nasongo, 2015:61). This greatly contributed to a lack of peace and resulted in insecurity challenges, not only in Uganda but also in the neighbouring countries such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Hence insecurity extended to other countries and regions (United Nations, 2006). The situation worsens when the signs of insecurity remain visible in society for a longer period of time. For instance, it is evident that despite efforts by the UN to promote sustainable peace in post-armed conflict situations, peace remains very delicate and northern Uganda is no exception (Richmond, 2017:14).

## 2.5. Dynamic impact of the Northern Uganda armed conflict on communities

In this sub-section, we look at the general outcomes of armed conflict which are dynamic in nature depending on where it occurs (Nasongo, 2015:89). These dynamics may therefore differ case by case depending on cause and location such as northern Uganda where factors such as displacement of people in IDP camps, lack of access to social services, destruction of property, socio-economic decline, and disease outbreak occurred. It should be noted that these factors are inter-linked as reflected below.

The first outcome relates to a notable increasing trend in new displacements (IMDC, 2018: 19). In the northern Uganda armed conflict, almost the entire population was forced to live in squalid Internally People's Displacement Camps (IDPs) and protected villages (Amone, 2007:643; Cheney, 2005:12). This altered the whole social fabric of the Acholi community and the natives felt the Acholi land was a huge 'prison' for them. Moreover, the experience of the war and the resultant life in IDP camps greatly affected gender relations as men were deprived of the economic capital such as land and livestock (Amone, 2007:642). The women on the other side whose role largely remained unchanged were culturally confined to home chores. The burden of feeding the family during life in IDP camp revolved around the women and children (Cheney, 2005). These conditions generally rendered people prone to earning their living by offering their labour in return for little money or in-kind payment to put food on table. Consequently, children were also offering their labour.

It proved tough for families to provide for themselves with the basic needs of life. At a later stage, the World Food Program (WFP) and other NGOs started to distribute food thus people became dependent on handouts (Amone, 2007: 644). In other words, the camps became distribution points for food and other services. Amone, (2007:643-653) narrates how communities in Northern Uganda were left without a livelihood and had to depend largely on humanitarian food relief. This in itself promoted a dependency culture. The IDP camps also turned out to be a place where social amenities were available, for example, schools and health facilities. These facilities were more accessible to those who offered humanitarian services and served as pull factors for the natives. The people in IDP camps sold some of the items they received as well as the produce that they harvested from the small gardens/farms around the camps. People came from many other cities and towns such as Kampala to buy from the natives (Study participants, 2019). The

population density in camp settlements became higher with nucleated settlements. This seems to have led to urbanisation which has been sustained up to today. People's lifestyle seemed to have changed as different tribes and clans from different districts of the Acholi sub-region became mixed compared to the pre-war period where people belonging to the same culture stayed and lived alone. It should be noted that the most affected districts were Kitgum, Gulu and Pader ( Amone. 2007: 641-643).

Additionally, the free social service offered by government was limited to education and health. In addition, the population was also unstable as government could not plan for the overwhelming population. The population was also very mobile given the security situation during the war hence leading to scarcity in some situations.  With a large number of people, it was also difficult for the government to provide a speedy response. Although most of the economic activities were disoriented during the war, some of them were in operation. Some children also had to work to supplement income of their parents and caretakers. Young girls went into prostitution at places such as Buganda Pub, and other engaged in some manual labour at the markets. The business people put up social services such as health facilities and schools. Thus, children worked to be able to support themselves in these new situations[1] .

During the war, the original economic activities of members of rural communities such as agricultural production and sales of the agricultural produce were disrupted leading to a shift in their activities to offer casual labour in town through petty trade. Since parents earned very little during this period, they could not cater for their needs such as legal services, education, and health and consequently, violation of children's rights had to follow (participants, 2018). A theory of well-being would consider the fulfillment of children's rights as priority without underestimating the conditions in which girls and boys work and live. Similarly, the social justice principles would question whether there are coordination mechanisms and actions demonstrating responsibility for addressing social justice for children. The absence of these aspects signifies a dark world for children and an unsustainable future for the next generation of children.

When peace came to northern Uganda, it was possible to re-introduce civic education and some people went back to their homes. This was a directive from the government of Uganda

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[1] FGI 2, Parents and Caretakers of Nwoya and FGI 4, Gulu

(Richmond, 2017:52). Because of the presence of social services, some people chose to stay in Internally Displaced Camps. However, the government later made a special announcement for all people to re-settle back in their previous homes and camps were abolished (Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:11). When camps were closed, some people went back to their places of origin and started once again to engage heavily in agricultural related activities and brought the surplus produce to the trading centres. These centres continued to develop as the population increased. Traders from Kampala and other major towns continued to flock the Acholi sub-region up to today for trading purposes[2].

Interestingly, the places where camps were located became urban centres and town suburbs as evident today. This happened because some people never went back to their original homes but settled according to commercial interests. So, population distribution was determined by the economic factors. More pronounced trading centres became densely populated because trading was the only major activity for men and women, and boys and girls after the war. The sparsely populated areas were those with limited trading activities. The only factor that reduced the population in trading centres was the need to go and occupy one's original and previous family land because other people had started settling where land was left unoccupied even if it did not belong to them before. The remnants of the camps also became less congested for the same reason. The number of people re-settling back home begun to increase in the rural remote areas. The population became very mobile. Moreover, during the cultivation seasons in the villages, people were there and moved to town during the time of selling harvests. Others only went home for political campaigns for leadership positions[3].

Notably, for social reasons, the re-opening of schools in rural areas in northern Uganda was a driving factor. The school dues charged in Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) for scholastic materials, uniforms and meals were lower in the rural settings than in the urban areas[4].

Also, in the Acholi sub-region, a number of male counterparts spent most of the time

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[2] FGI 2, Parents and Caretakers of Gulu

[3] FGI 7, Parents and Caretakers of Gulu

[4] FGI 6, Parents and Caretakers of Nwoya

together as they had been deprived of their work. They could not have access to land for cultivation. Consequently, families were pushed into abject poverty. The continuous decline in socio-economic growth exacerbated the situation of women and children and hence increased their vulnerability.

Similarly, the war disrupted the original economic activities of members of rural communities such as agricultural production and sales of the agricultural produce lead to a shift in their activities to offer casual labour in town such as Gulu, Kitgum, Lira and others. The local people fetched water in the camp and in hotels, loaded trucks, sorted seed items in produce stores and worked in quarry sites. While doing this work, many parents went with their children while those children left behind had to find an option for survival and some resorted to hazardous child labour practices. They had to offer casual labour through petty trade such as selling roasted ground nuts.

More so, the armed conflict resulted in poverty in northern Uganda because of the destruction of property. The Acholi natives have a saying "*Lacan penino*" meaning that the poor do not sleep. They worked hard for survival to earn a dollar. Absolute poverty was measured at 60% in the Acholi sub-region during war, 30% at national level and 18% in the central region on average (UJCC, 2016). The capital city Kampala is located in the central region. The absolute poverty in the northern region impacted on children in terms of their social welfare such as poor housing, malnutrition, stunted growth; children became criminals, variations in rights, and the spread of HIV among others (Sweetman, 2005:21). As some children slept on verandas and were raped, others formed criminal gangs and started stealing from people for their own survival (Amone, 2007:641). A number of children committed atrocities each day up to the recent past in the name of looking for income for their own survival (Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:14). Besides, people from other parts of the country infiltrated, who came to buy goods supplied to those in camps during the war; resulting in the adoption of a new culture which monetised everything into a cash economy. They could not get anything without money and could not get money without working[5]

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[5] GDS 5, parents and caretaker of Gulu

Noteworthy, at a later stage some NGOs such as Sr. Rachelle Reception Centre (RRC), Gulu Support the Children's Organization (GUSCO), Kitgum Concerned Women's Association Rehabilitation Centre (KICWA) and World Vision Children of War Rehabilitation Centre (WVC) started rehabilitation centres for the returnees after the war while others such as St. Jude initiated orphanages (Amone,2007:641). These rehabilitation centres took care of children for only a short period of time and the returnees were later re-integrated into the community but without sustainable support. Some children found it difficult to settle back in their communities given the stigma. Some of these returnees are quoted saying "*I was raped and got pregnant in the bush. The presence of my child here is evidence*". As a result, such children continued to suffer the consequences and this seem to affect their families up to today. Some boys preferred to either join the government army or be helped to settle in an urban centre or elsewhere away from their initial communities (Amone, 2007: 654). The consequences of these situations are likely to continue to affect more generations if solutions such as giving people a voice are not sought early enough. Therefore, during the rehabilitation and re-integration process, it is crucial to support the abductees as they try to settle back with their parents, families and communities (Amon, 2007:642). This would partly assist in helping individuals, especially the children to survive and thrive and sustain these efforts.

It should be noted from the above discussion that although men and women, and boys and girls were all affected by the war, it affected each category differently. Men were at the forefront and were leading the various key groups of the army. Meanwhile, women and children's vulnerability was highly evident in many ways. A theory of well-being would consider the presence of universal well-being dimensions such as resources/material conditions, lived life experiences and relationality, including economic and social cultural systems which seem to have been missing prior to the war and during the war. If this was the situation then one wonders about the quality of gender relations and general life situations of especially women and girls with disabilities amid the post-war era with rampant poverty that seem to have emanated from the war.

**2.5. The End of Gunshots in Northern Uganda**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, armed conflict is very common in African countries. The armed conflict in northern Uganda was no exception. This sub-section explains how the end of gunshots provided a more detailed understanding of war because the end of gunshots may not necessarily mean the end of war. Gunshot here refers to cease fire while war or armed conflict may be broader than this. Although this analysis is not exhaustive, this sub-section highlights how the gunshot in northern Uganda became silent. It should be noted that there could have been internal and external factors that contributed to the improvement of the situation.

To begin with, as an external factor, Kony and the LRA rebels found themselves pushed to other countries such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo yet movement was guided by international treaties (Nasongo, 2015:22). Crossing the border back to Uganda had and still has diplomatic implications. This explains the role of neighbouring countries in resolving conflicts (Kwasi and Collier, 2005: 529). Although some rebels remained on the Ugandan side, most of the firearms were in South Sudan contributing to accelerating and prolonging the armed conflict due to their cheap availability (Kwasi and Collier, 2005:262). However, this was enough to somehow loosen the strong ties and the rebels seemed to have weakened. Secondly, there were different national interests of the involved political parties but all these remained calm for survival reasons. And thirdly, the parties looked at the level of development in the affected countries and it was too low.

Consequently, the Acholi natives opted for peace talks for a number of reasons. For instance, many children had been abducted and their families wanted to receive them back home. This forced many people in the Acholi sub-region to favour peace talks with rebels and save their children from captivity (Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:11). Peace talks threw a new life into war and leaders started to think differently and came up with meeting venues to be able to negotiate. This saw the restriction of movement of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). These LRA rebels were heading for peace talks in 2006 (Amone, 2007:641). There were agenda items to guide the peace talks. Firstly, interest was present in stopping hostility (the hostility propaganda). Secondly, the comprehensive peace solution was to guide the peace talks, for example, by looking at Uganda and trying to bring peace politically, economically, socially and promoting justice thus moving from an exclusive to inclusive agenda.

This was beneficial in a way that segregation on the basis of tribe, colour, religion, sex was unacceptable. Thirdly, truth telling and reconciliation was an agenda item too. People were put on task to tell the truth regarding what happened and the culprits were held accountable for revealing the identity of victims and perpetrators. There were massive killings in places such as Balonyo village and this called for reconciliation. Who should be held accountable for such atrocities? The view also existed that such an atrocity had been already committed but that life needed to go on without dwelling too much in the past. Fourthly, ceasefire was another agenda item and this rendered agenda item number one on stopping hostility less important and more temporary. The fifth agenda item was to promote international cooperation. For instance, the different countries in the Great Lakes region had to cooperate in some way. South Sudan and Uganda agreed to operate by this principle, and this brought some sustainable peace that we see today[6].

Notably, other strategies such as holding political elites accountable and reforming state institutions have helped some countries to end violence. A case in point is the Democratic Republic of Congo that employed this strategy to deal with conflicts that occurred since 1996. In this country, the army was also used to redistribute patronage. Additionally, international partners devised punitive measures for countries such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They also pressurised governments to refrain from engaging in violence and to accept negotiations instead. This however does not rule out aggression, deprivation and frustration that seem to have jeopardised social justice and the well-being of the people. Conflict analysis is therefore very vital to reach a concrete solution. Like elsewhere in the world, after signing the peace agreement, war did not end immediately and even when the guns were silent, the effects of the war were heavily felt by the Acholi natives. Besides, some parties may prefer to understand how the local social forces shape national and international peace processes before they design meaningful interventions to address an armed conflict (Richmond, 2017:15).

As much as the government made efforts, non- government actors have also been instrumental in addressing conflict and its effects in northern Uganda. The researcher looks at the role of NGOs. These are categorised as international, national and local depending on the level of establishment and mandate. These NGOs worked within the local government power structure

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[6] FGI 7 and 8 in Nwoya, FGI 5 and 8 in Gulu for parents and caretakers

(Uganda National NGOs Policy, 2010) and the government also created partnerships with some of them for effective social service delivery. Examples of international NGOs with visibility in the Acholi sub-region include World Vision, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children. Most of these NGOs and NGO networks attach value to participatory development, self-reliance, and build linkages for development, institutional building and sustainability. To date, some NGOs have closed offices in northern Uganda due to the changed funding environment and have demanded to be shifted to other disaster affected areas. Over 80 percent of the NGOs had left by 2010 (Spitzer and Twiklirize, 2012:75). It is also observable that some NGOs shifted focus to rehabilitation and recovery programmes while others still continue to expand their operations across the northern region employing a holistic approach (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:76). While there is no question about the need and importance of NGOs addressing development issues, it is surprising that gender inequality, the menace of hazardous child labour and disability challenges still remains the same in the Acholi sub-region. Despite various forms of support (economic, social, etcetera) provided by these NGOs, child vulnerability (social, physical and spiritual) also remains the same thereby jeopardising the well-being of children.

Today northern Uganda is considered a post-conflict region. This means that gunshots are not heard anymore, no warfare exists and it is secure to stay. People seem to be living a 'normal life' like elsewhere in other country regions. Majority of the people settled back in their original homes except those that remained in the camps around the major towns because of their interest in trade-related activities. Sector reform is continuing with a number of development programmes being done by some of the NGOs as highlighted above. The region is however considered the poorest in Uganda and it is also confirmed to have the highest numbers of working children with disabilities compared to other regions (Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2014:19, UBOS, 2014:28). That is the context in which the study is being conducted.

In addition, a number of influential leaders in the region are visible on the media attempting diplomatic interfacing through sharing their experience of the war and their ideas on how to improve the situation in order to prevent further conflict occurrences. There could probably be a similar trend at the grassroots level in families and at local community level. The fact that building

peaceful communities is a process, interested parties, especially natives of the region want to see that peace remains. The end of armed conflict does not guarantee peace, especially when people are still denied their social, economic and political rights. Conflict management and transformation are some of the long-term processes that need to continue on the ground.

## 2.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has given us an insight on armed conflicts in northern Uganda. It has also given us an overview of the influencing factors that continued to sustain armed conflict in the region. It is therefore against this background that the armed conflict context becomes important to situate our study themes, namely gender relations, the menace of hazardous child labour and disability without prioritising any, as highlighted in Chapter One. This background on armed conflict has given us a picture of where we are today in the post-conflict era in northern Uganda where this study was conducted. We need to be cognisant of the fact that the absence of war does not necessarily mean that conflict is over for good. Sometimes open warfare unravels but the post-conflict situation may remain apprehensive for years and can even be more violent than the conflict itself[7]. During this study, participants in northern Uganda expressed a similar view.

There is no doubt that the northern Uganda armed conflict impacted on Uganda's generation of children – socially, psychologically, physically and economically and has had a very negative influence on their well-being. Additionally, it has impacted on the kind of adults they have become, as well as the future generations, including their own children who we see today. This leads us to the third chapter that provides a context for how war affects children referring to the experiences in northern Uganda.

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[7] Richmond. O (2017). Pg.52. Liberal Peace and Post Conflict in Africa. Re-thinking Peace and Conflict Studies, Manchester, UK

<div align="center">**CHAPTER THREE**</div>

<div align="center">**IMPACT OF WAR ON CHILDREN IN AFRICA AND ASSOCIATED
VULNERABILITIES**</div>

### 3.1 Chapter Introduction

The discussion in Chapter Two provided an account of the northern Uganda armed conflict that had a devastating long-term impact on communities. It highlights some of the most important factors responsible for the armed conflict and throws some light on the situations that might have motivated the end of gunshots in the northern region to what the situation is like today. With the above in mind, there is no doubt that children too were heavily affected[8] and hence increased numbers of child war victims[9] were faced with multiple vulnerabilities (Ben-Arieh et. al, 2014: 2655; Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:72; Tamashiro, 2010:1). The types of child vulnerabilities during war continues to increase and change form (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:73). There is therefore no doubt that children in armed conflict-affected areas pay the heaviest price (Anumaka, 2013:56). The African proverb 'when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers' reflects the suffering of generations of children in northern Uganda to the present day (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:70).

Although there seems to be a notable gap in child-specific data (Save the Children, 2018; 18), the children affected by armed conflicts are often rendered speechless as they suffer both direct and indirect consequences. It is against this major backdrop that the researcher considers the well-being of children in these difficult conditions. The main purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of how children have fallen victims of these circumstances that point to their different experiences during the war and the post-war era.

The major reasons for the vulnerability of children generated by war are explored. Additionally, the kind of vulnerabilities and possible ways of curbing the situation are discussed in this chapter. Save the Children (2018: 4) highlights six common grave violations that affect

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[8]Children are now more vulnerable to conflict than before (Save the Children, 2018;7)

[9] See Save the Children, (2018:10&12), Evidence from the past two decades of conflicts show that children will pay an intense price. Notably, 2016 is the current year for which data on children and war exists.

children namely: maiming and killings, sexual violence, attacks on hospitals and schools, and denial of humanitarian access such as food scarcity. Spitzer and Twikirize, (2012:68); and Veale and Stavrou, (2003:8) concur by urguing that access to basic needs becomes almost impossible during such difficult times. For the case of northern Uganda, while in rebel captivity, rebels sent children to attack nearby villages and loot food. In the case of extreme scarcity, children fed on wild fruits and grass. Secondly, some children normally were recruited and used to do particular work such as carrying guns, ammunition and other belongings of the rebels[10]. Some children also suffered from displacement when they have to flee with their families. These above-mentioned encompass most vulnerabilities that children increasingly experience during and after a war. This chapter therefore serves as preparation for the analysis of the ways in which the children in the study suffered from the war years in northern Uganda, that happened a generation before they were born.

**3.2 A Snapshot of Statistical Estimates**

Although the number of countries affected by conflict has decreased globally[11], there are disturbing figures of conflict-affected children amid limited legal and normative safeguard (Save the Children, 2018:16). Today, one in six children globally live in conflict areas around the world with the majority being in Africa and the middle East (Save the Children, 2018: 3-8). Besides, there is a notable three hundred and fifty seven million children living close to conflict incidents while twenty-eight million children were displaced by conflict in the year 2016 ( Save the Children, 2018:8). Moreover, it is known that a minimum number of 73,023 children were killed or injured across 25 conflicts in the period between 2005 and 2016, but the number is likely to be higher in future (Save the Children, 2018:10). Furthermore, an estimated ten thousand and sixty-eight children are noted to have been killed or maimed in armed conflict during the year 2016 (Save the Children, 2018: 16). The trend is alarming. Notably, despite the higher figures, specific data on children with disabilities as well as child-specific and sex-disaggregated data in conflict is still an alarming gap (Save the Children, 2018:10-12). This study probes gender relations and disability as two additional key themes. The availability of reliable data on these themes would add great

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[10] See Amone P'olak (2007). Pg 645 notes that over 25,000 children were abducted during the Northern Uganda Armed conflict and tasked to do different work for the rebels and raid food stuff. This depended on age group.

[11] Also see pg 14&15 of the report by Save the Children, 2018

value to this study. More so, this study being qualitative in nature, does not add much to the statistical side regarding war-affected working children with disability and yet this gap generally adds to the vulnerability of such children.

## 3.3 Vulnerability Drivers for Armed conflict affected Children

Armed conflict breeds vulnerability and therefore children become susceptible in multiple ways and for various reasons[12]. In the following paragraphs, we explore instances where children are exposed to risk and what they actually experience. First, countries that experience a longer war period have many children born and raised during the difficult war time. For instance, the Southern Sudanese Civil War began in 1983 and the peace agreement was only signed in early 2005 (Amone, 2007:642). Children matured into young adults of 20 years and beyond and have only experienced war up to the present day! This is just only one case among the many others such as the northern Ugandan armed conflict that lasted over two decades (1986-2005) (Amone, 2007:641). According to Cheney (2005:41), some children grew up with the LRA rebels amid being denied their rights and in constant fear. Besides, children are easily swayed and manipulated. Being a child leaves one with a limited ability for self-protection. Such children are subjected to a number of indescribable afflictions as analysed in the subsequent sub-themes. Moreover, all children are susceptible to violence, mistreatment and abuse, abandonment and exploitation (Save the Children, 2018:10). This could be responsible for shifting vulnerabilities depending on an incidence occurring at a given time of the war. In addition, the war escalates such trends and make situations unbearable for children who are trying to survive. Such children automatically encounter direct and indirect consequences and pay an intense prise (Save the Children, 2018:10).

## 3.4 Direct Consequences of Armed conflict on Children

The outcomes of armed conflict on children poses a double vulnerability most especially for those already with particular forms of disability. Their survival is made challenging and the girl child experience the worst. Access to most of the services during the war period becomes a dream. In this sub-section, we discover the circuitous consequences of war experienced by children such as getting recruited by armed forces as child soldiers, encountering death, sexual violence,

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[12] According to Barnnet (2007; 316), half of war victims around the globe are children. These get easily recruited because of readily available weapons. For example during the Northern Uganda Armed conflict, the A-K 47 Gun that was acquired at the *"price of a chicken"* coupled with its lightweight portable by the children

exposure to disability, diseases such as STIs and HIV/Aids, malnutrition and psychological trauma (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012: 76). Although this list is not exhaustive, in the subsequent paragraphs further exploration on each factor follows. Hall et. al (2018:23) report a sharp rise in mortality and the orphaning rates due to some of the above factors.

### a) Child soldiers

According to Save the Children (2018: 22), for the last two decades, tens of thousands of girls and boys below age 18 have been recruited into armed forces across the globe. Nasongo (2015:17; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:25) concur by urging that there is an increase in numbers of child soldiers. Some of these children are normally forced while others are coerced to join the state or non-state forces. Some of those coerced first face abduction like in the case of the northern Ugandan armed conflict where children were tied together and forced to march without rest for multiple days (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:71; Cheney, 2005:27). The LRA rebels developed a tactic of abducting children since it was then easier to control and instruct them. For instance, in northern Uganda, children were instructed to torture, kill, raid, burn villages and commit other atrocities beyond belief against their own communities and against each other (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:70; Amone, 2007:645). It must be noted that in the Acholi culture, it is believed that when a child kills, the spirit of the dead would not only haunt the child who was forced to kill but the entire community and environment (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:76). Recruiting child soldiers is an aspect contrary to Ben-Arieh et. al, (2014: 3087) who stresses that it is a war crime to recruit child soldiers today. This would be the norm but not followed by many of the countries that still recruit children in armed forces. In 2016 alone, there were over forty-nine thousand girls and boys hired into armed forces around the globe (Save the Children, 2018:22). This is the worst form of injustice and hazardous child labour and can be perceived as another war against children that deprives them of their childhood life. It is shocking that children serve in the capacity of combatant soldiers and porters, among other roles. Similar tasks such as carrying supplies and frontline fighting were done by children below eighteen years in Somalia (Save the Children, 2018:22). Moreover, during the 10-year civil war in Sierra Leone, children were involved in looting property and committed unspeakable violent crimes such as rape, murder and torture (Ben-Arieh et. al, 2014:3089). They remained violent until Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UNICEF described them as innocent and vulnerable – an idea that was rejected by many people

who referred to them as murderous child soldiers of the rebel forces. Similarly, the situation is worse in South Sudan whereas of February 2019; only three thousand and one hundred children have been freed from the armed group since the conflict began. The youngest of these children is aged 10 (UNICEF, 2019:3). This is amid the scarce data on the numbers of children recruited and used in armed forces.

Notably, the recruiting groups seem to capitalise on the fact that children are innocent and naïve. Moreover, the majority of these children remain unaware of the associated dangers such as susceptibility to various forms of disability. Children seem to be taken as being cheaper to hire. They also seem to have a propensity to abide by authority and not question it. Unsurprisingly, while in such difficult situation of war, children may welcome being recruited into armed forces as a way of finding resources to solve their life problems. Save the Children (2018:22) notes that all state-related conflicts that occurred between the late 1980s and 2010 had at least one group of armed children involved in the fight. Unfortunately, these children usually seem to be unconscious of their increased vulnerability as a result of being involved in armed conflict. They are vulnerable to all sorts of abuse and are faced with physical violence and attack (IMDC, 2010). Their legs were shot as they tried to escape from the rebel groups and later tied to stop the bleeding. This is how some of them returned to their families (Amone, 2007:650).  Families are not only left in agony because of the death of their children but countries also lose important future leaders and useful citizens. The constant commemoration of the International Day against the use of Child Soldiers as already set annually would probably aid in curbing this vice, though it has yielded no fruitful results as yet since the trend in this regard seems to continue.

On the other hand, it is surprising that children who survive death and successfully maneuver through the journey of being child soldiers are on many occasions treated as a standardised group by the rehabilitating organisations and their respective governments (Save the Children, 2018). This increases the chance of making them feel more special than other children. The feeling of being exceptionally unique may breed certain behaviour among children as they try to conduct themselves in an esteemed manner. Such children, when integrated into society may easily interfere with the rights of fellow children. For example, they could easily persuade their counterparts to join the armed forces in case of re-occurrence of war; another form of hazardous child labour visible today, especially in developing countries. When child soldiers take on such a

role, they miss out on formal education (Save the Children, 2018: 22). On return from the battlefield, some of these children may feel too mature to get back to formal education while others may falsely believe that they are social misfits in school. The fact that they get used to earning 'sweet' money as child soldiers eventually complicates the whole situation. Children resort to other available options such as choosing from the different existing forms of hazardous child labour practices in order to continue earning money and meet their basic needs. These situations are most likely to undermine their level of well-being. For instance, in the course of working in hazardous conditions, some children may be injured while others may even face death after surviving many years of working on battle fields as child soldiers even at the forefront.

### b) Children die due to Armed Conflict

Although child soldiers kill many people, including their community elders, parents and fellow children, they too get killed in the battle field. The lowest number of children killed in 25 conflicts between the year 2005 to 2016 is noted to be about 73,000 with over 10,000 killed in 2016 alone (Save the Children, 2018:19). More killings of children as a result of war are noted to be higher in African countries such as Somalia (Save the Children, 2018: 18; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:14). Similarly, in the northern Ugandan armed conflict, Cheney notes that a number of children lost their lives (Cheney, 2005: 41). In some cases, children were made to move long distances while carrying heavy stolen goods for the rebels without rest. Those who claimed to have got tired along the way were killed (Cheney, 2005:26). It is not surprising that some of these children were killed by fellow children who were earlier abducted and subjected to carrying heavy loads during abduction (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:70). As they were enrolled into higher rebel ranks, they sought revenge by treating their fellow children in a similar manner with a brutality even worse than what they had gone through to the extent of killing them. Notably, death among children is noted to be higher due to landmines, improvised explosive devices, crossfire, cluster munitions, suicide attacks, house demolitions, torture and during arrest campaigns (Save the Children, 2018; 20). Moreover, in Liberia, a young boy was gruesomely murdered by fellow children who were members of the so-called Small Boys Unit (SBU) of the rebel forces of the Revolutionary United Front. These children cut the hands and legs of the young boy one at a time. Thereafter, they threw him in a toilet pit (Ben-Arieh et. al, (2014: 3089). This ritual of terror was committed by these coerced young boys yet they were not subjected to trial by the International

Criminal Court (ICC) because of being below age 18. During the Rwandan genocide, some children took up arms in self-defiance as different institutions such as the police, churches, hospitals and courts were also organised for murder (Ben-Arieh et. al, (2014: 3090).

Besides, children who survive death are noted to suffer as they encounter multiple health challenges as a result of armed conflict. For instance, the prevailing poor sanitation, especially in camp settlements may lead to infectious diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea. Tropical diseases such as trachoma may spread due to lack of safe and clean water. The lack of awareness of disease prevention coupled with inadequate health services complicate the situation, Tamashiro (2010:1) also affirms that many lives of children have been lost during and after the armed conflict. In addition, challenges such as the malnutrition outbreak due to lack of food security is common in war-torn countries that have large numbers of displaced children with high chances of them dying due to nutritional deficiency and hunger. For instance, because of extreme hunger, children in northern Uganda reached a point that they blamed their parents for failing to provide food and other basic needs of life during the war period (Cheney, 2005:33). Furthermore, ignorance in armed conflict is responsible for more hurdles causing children to die of malnutrition while others seem to depart this life after suffering from diseases that could have been easily managed. Health services are very scarce during and after the war as conflict zones usually experience destruction of infrastructure.

### c) Sexual Violence against armed-conflict affected Children

Another direct consequence of war on children is sexual violence (Amone, 2007:642). Although data on sexual violence are scarce due to under-reporting coupled with the associated stigma (Save the Children, 2018:10), a number of children experience this ill. Sexual violence strikes boys and girls differently (Eden, 2017:62; Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:73). For instance, during armed conflict, the armed forces use the girl children for sexual pleasure. Girls are forced to have sex against their will. For the case of the northern Ugandan armed conflict, some children were taken as sex slaves (Cheney, 2005: 39). Notably, other children may experience one or multiple forms of sexual violence, including but not limited to rape (counting genocidal rape), defilement (sex with a minor), unwanted sexual touches and words as well as forced early marriages (Cheney, 2005:40). For example, during armed conflict in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda, child mothers were forced to marry rebels and produced unwanted children at

a young age (Mukasa, 2017:354). There is no doubt that these unpleasant experiences leave an indelible mark on girls. They are psychologically affected for the rest of their lives if not provided with support to overcome the situation. Additionally, other children acquire sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/ (Mehus et al., 2018: 3). The effects of HIV are multiple and last for generations. For instance, although the northern Ugandan armed conflict happened two decades ago, the pinch of the HIV genocide is still felt today with increasing numbers of children being born with the virus. The district of Nwoya, Kitgum, Gulu and Amuru are noted to have the highest number of HIV positive children born with the virus in that order (Economic Policy Research, the Republic of Uganda, UNICEF (2017:70-71). These are some of the long-lasting impacts of war that adds to the psychological damage of children and their families.

It is worth noting that war-affected countries may have laws on sexual violence but the intensity of awareness at community level may be low. Children may also feel helpless to disobey authority in an armed conflict situation. They may instead adhere to sexual attacks and other forms of violence because they have no option. The psychological harm as a result of all of the above-mentioned factors is severe.

### d) Psychological Trauma in Children

The possibility of children having psycho-social trauma resulting from post-traumatic stress disorder is unquestionable. During and after the war, children are likely to experience damage in form of trauma that could be associated with multiple shifting vulnerabilities (Save the Children, 2018:10; Klasen etal., 2010: 1097). These vulnerabilities are hard to cure especially with recurrent conflicts. (Mehus, 2018:3; Save the Children, 2018:8 and Infuma et al. 2015: 2). Spitzer and Kwikiriza, (2012:68-72) affirm that childhood trauma which is also referred to as toxic stress may appear in the form of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse besides childhood misfortune with injurious and long-term effects. To expand, physical abuse may refer to being kicked and injured, beaten up, an object thrown at a child among other examples. Emotional abuse would refer to being threatened verbally, unjustly punished, loss of parents, relatives and friends, and lack of care. A case in point for the northern Ugandan armed conflict is that majority of the children were forced to commit atrocities such as shooting and burning houses and villages, hitting fellow children on the back of the head and looting homesteads (Olema, 2012:7; IMDC, 2010; 25; Annan, and Blattman, 2006). These were nasty experiences that destroyed the lives of children. Moreover,

these children were guarded by soldiers all the time even when going to fetch water (Cheney, 2005:27). Infurna et al., (2015; 1) argue that childhood trauma is linked to daily well-being with high chances of experiencing a serious decline in health in middle and old age. Therefore, trauma puts health at risk, not only during childhood but also later in life hence affecting their life-span.

Furthermore, besides a direct encounter with war, some children may experience trauma indirectly. For instance, as a consequence of war on their parents and caretakers, children are likely to encounter physical and emotional trauma as a circuitous effect (Mehus et al., 2018: 4; Ben-Arieh et. al, 2014; 2626). Similarly, with or without parents, surviving war may mean working harder to ensure survival as a child, sustaining one's life to ably cope with the loss of parents. Children suffer these vulnerabilities and have a higher risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder that is even worse if they are of refugee status, given that they have to make difficult decisions without the guidance of a caring adult such as parent of foster parent (Eda, 2017:62). Irrespective of direct or indirect war experience, children will most likely show distress of trauma in their behaviour. This may differ from child to child. It may either be a visible kind of trauma where children act out and become violent or the invisible one of which cannot be seen as the affected child may remain silent. Children in the latter category are most likely to be detached as trauma gets into their mind (Ben-Arieh et. al, 2014: 2626). It may therefore become difficult to reach them and they appear absentminded. It is unsurprising to note that the brain may try to protect the child from the realities of trauma and store the trauma even up to age 12, but it is likely to eventually reflect and show up as they mature to age18 and onwards. This may come with very severe emotional reactions and it may not be easy to understand where it is coming from. There are often flashbacks since trauma is regarded as a senseless act as the brain struggles to process this act. Consequently, the brain tries to figure out much later and unless helped, it can re-occur often (Infurna et al., (2015: 10); Ben-Arieh et. al, (2014: 2627). Traumatised children may have to deal with day-to-day struggles such as depression and anxiety, difficulty with trusting relationships, staying in jobs, overreacting, may self-medicate, indulge in alcohol dependency, beat up their wives or quarrel with their husbands when they grow up, among other unacceptable behaviour (Mehus et al., 2018:5; Ottisova et al., 2018).

This study is done with and on working children with physical disabilities in a post- war context. There is no doubt that the experiences of children in relating with parents and caregivers

who have experienced war directly must have contributed greatly to what these children have become today. More so, the involvement in hazardous child labour serves as re-traumatisation of children because they already have an existing trauma of with disability. In essence, this is a double trauma – physically, emotionally and in many ways coupled with multiple likely effects. Hazardous child labour results in continuous trauma and chronic stress. It is an ongoing strain as these children continue to engage in hazardous child labour and this extreme hassle may have a different effect as they continue to grow up. Chances are very high that some of these children may lose what it means to be human, if they have not yet done so (Infuma et al., 2015: 3) . A child like this can put a knife in your heart with a smile because s/he has never felt compassion and so is unable to express it. In addition, there is no doubt that being in hazardous child labour and being paid a meagre sum or even in kind may mean that these children are in permanent survival mode. They can do anything for the sake of surviving for the next day and it is most likely that they are separated from the reality of life. On the surface, such children may look normal and happy but this may not be the case (Ben-Arieh et. al, 2014: 2626). They may not even be aware of the trauma but may require help to bring it to consciousness if they are to positively maneuver the situation and achieve some portion of wellbeing.  This may be a huge gap most especially among the working children with a physical disability – the primary participants in this study.

e) **The Disability effect of Armed conflict on children**

Around the world, there seems to be persistent and dramatic increases in violence against children, including casualties and injuries that adds to disability cases among children. Moreover, according to Save the Children (2018: 12), there is a lack of ample dependable data relating to injuries among children during armed conflict situations. Undoubtedly, a number of children is most likely to acquire moderate or severe forms of disability due to inadequate medical attention (Kuper et.al, 2014:1), given that medical services are very scarce during and soon after war. The government structures such as hospitals and health facilities are destroyed by war and any new private service providers, if any, may be too expensive for the local people to afford during such a time. Furthermore, a number of children suffer physical harm during and shortly after the war. For instance, there were multiple cases of amputations, scars, and other physical deformities due to land mines, gun shootings and through the penalties received by children during the northern Ugandan armed conflict. Punishments such as beating were applied by the rebels whenever any

child acted differently from what was instructed (Klasen et al., 2010: 1101). Cheney, (2005) affirms how children were obedient to the rebels while in captivity given their cultural background of observing absolute obedience to their parents and elders. The punishment resulted in multiple injuries and disabilities and possibly left other children prone to various forms of disability (Cheney, 2005:40).

Notably, today there are diseases emerging and affecting children in northern Uganda. For instance, the nodding disease syndrome (form of physical disability) described as an enigmatic neuropsychiatric and epileptic form disorder associated with psychomotor, mental, and physical growth retardation. The disorder affects otherwise previously normal children aged 3–18 years, with a slight predominance for the male child. This nodding disease syndrome is named after its symptoms where the affected children keep nodding different body parts. In northern Uganda, it is known that over 3000 children are affected with more than one child distressed per family (Nakigudde et al., (2006:2). The authors also confirms that children in countries such as the Republic of South Sudan and Liberia have also been affected by the nodding disease syndrome. The affected communities have generated a number of perceived causes, including some theories related to intentional poisoning of water sources and foods, and causes related to fumes and chemicals from ammunitions used during civil wars in the affected regions. No treatments have proven effective in reversing the course of the disorder, and a cure remains a distant goal. Community members have used indigenous medicines, cleansing rituals, and prayer interventions, but have not realised any reasonable improvements. It is therefore not surprising that some of these children die at an early age, especially if their disability is coupled with factors such as malnutrition that is commonly linked to war, and self and community-related stigma among other factors.

**f) Orphanhood**

According to UNICEF (2018:10), an orphan is described as a child below age 18 who has lost one or both parents to any cause. In this case, our discussion is mainly on war and HIV orphans, both girls and boys. How does orphanhood affect these children? After armed conflict, a number of children are left without any parents and caretakers (Anumaka, 2013:56). Parents are either killed during the war or catch diseases such as HIV/AIDS that seem to transmit like a fire, especially during armed conflict (Ben-Arieh et. al, 2014: 2656). During this period, military personnel take advantage of sexual encounters with women and girls. For instance, some Liberian girls between ages 10 to 13 are said to have had their first sexual encounter with army men in exchange of gifts in the form of material rewards, cash and other gifts (Nkuhulu, 1999). Some girls were raped by a minimum of between 2-5 army men during their street prostitution work, among other challenges. These could have been children who no longer have parents and guardians to support them. Therefore, chances of acquiring the HIV virus in such situations were quite high. In Uganda, more than 50,000 demobilised HIV positive Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) soldiers retired in the villages while others were retrenched from the forces. This seems to have contributed to the faster spread of HIV amongst the population. A similar trend seems to have followed other in countries such as Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Namibia, South Sudan and Sudan that have also been affected by armed conflict and apartheid. One of the effects of HIV/Aids is the large numbers of orphans and vulnerable children spread across Africa, some of whom are in orphan-headed households.

Today, there are approximately 140 million orphans globally with Africa containing 52 million out of the total figure (UNICEF, 2018:11). These figures encompass children who are orphaned due to war whose numbers are not specified. Countries such as South Africa that suffered under Apartheid had over 2.8 million orphans in 2017 who lost their mother, father or both parents to HIV/Aids and other unspecified causes (UNICEF, 2018:17). On the other hand, IMDC (2010:9) and Tomashiro (2010: 4) document an estimated 2 million people killed during the Sudan war alone. This would have translated into thousands of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) that the country may not have been ready to handle. There are similar cases of OVC, especially in African countries affected by armed conflict such as northern Uganda where the IDP camps became breeding grounds for the HIV virus. This caused multiple deaths of parents/caregivers and

children as well as the separation of families due to conflicts resulting from HIV status. To date, UNICEF (2018: 4) notes women and girls as the most affected by HIV in Africa despite them being at the forefront in the fight. Increased numbers of orphan-headed households exist across Africa which stem from both war and the HIV disease burden.

Notably, HIV/AIDS is not only a health problem but also one that is at the very heart of development. It has a profound effect on society as it strikes predominantly at the main providers of food, income and care plus it increases the vulnerability of children.

The increasing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children stemming from the war have also left many extended families strained and unable to handle the grief challenges among children. Instead, there seem to be multiple cases of child abuse by family members.

### g) Hazardous child labour

The more than two decades of armed conflict in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda left many families devastated and contributed to the higher proportion of children getting into the worst forms of hazardous child labour, including those who were abducted and recruited in rebel ranks, carrying heavy loads in bonded labour (Amone, 2007:645). Some children remained defenceless against many other forms of exploitation such as exposure to sexual exploitation, prostitution, verbal abuse, beatings etcetera. Families were forced with all their members, including children, into deploying their labour to contribute to their survival. Women and children were the most vulnerable and marginalised in this conflict and the well-being of children was compromised (Annan, 2010). Many of the then children who are now parents, underwent these experiences and seem to experience worse situations today as they try to fend for their families. In the context of war, whether children are on the run or at home, their well-being must not be compromised (Terres de Hommes, 2016; King, 2008).

The vulnerability of children engaged in hazardous child labour and those with particular forms of disability are higher, most especially when a country or region experiences war as in the case of northern Uganda where a number of children grew up in IDP camps.

While in IDP camps, children normally continue their routine work such as collecting water from the boreholes. Although the water may be for home use mainly in own families, they are also enticed to fetched for other families by being given a coin. For the case of northern Uganda, this could have been the birth of hazardous child labour in IDP camps. Children worked alongside their mothers and caretakers to feed their families. They also worked in hotels, loading trucks, sorting seed items in produce stores and working in quarry sites. While doing this work, many parents went with their children. Other children left behind had to find an option for survival. They had to offer casual labour through petty trade such as selling roasted ground nuts. A number of authors affirm that the war in northern Uganda led to many children being exposed to undue hazardous child labour in the name of contributing to family income (Blattman & Annan, 2010).

## h) Child Trafficking

The child trafficking vice seems to constantly be in existence but is possibly most common during and after war. The trafficked children may be subjected to various forms of abuse such as hazardous child labour. Similarly, given that a number of parents/caregivers may fail to take care of their children during the war period, many of these children may be taken to engage in various paid work. For instance, in the case of the northern Ugandan armed conflict, children were taken as baby sitters to major centres, including Kampala and abroad. This is associated with high levels of sexual and physical abuse and may have persistent psychological implications (Ottisova et al., (2018). It presents a serious threat to security and human development, especially in Africa.

## 3. 5 Indirect consequences of War on Children

As a result of the war, children are faced with many challenging situations that may be incidental or unforeseen. Below is a description of what they encounter.

## a) Displacement of Children and their Families, and after-effects

Trani et al. (2011: 1189) note that during war, some children and their families are forced to live in squalid displacement settlement camps. For instance, the government of Uganda found it simpler and made it a strategy to create camps in order to protect people who also found it easier to live where they are protected. In northern Uganda alone, Cheney (2005: 39)

notes over 1.5 million children were displaced in addition to the over 30,000 children and youth abducted by the rebels as they slept in the bush with their parents. Many of the children flocked to town centres every night to spend nights in emergency accommodation centres such as bus parks and on verandas (Sweetman, 2005:22). This marked the beginning of the battle of the entire generation of children in the Acholi sub-region (Cheney, 2005; 40), including those who lived in camps. These trends seem not much different from other children who experience war elsewhere in Africa (Hall et. al, 2018:28).

*A community hall located in Gulu bus park where night commuters spent nights in Gulu town*

*(**Source**: Author, 2020)*

In northern Uganda, those who had an opportunity to live in Internally Displaced People's Camps did so (Amone, 2007:644). However, while in camps, many children missed out on various opportunities such as school and other key social amenities. This could have been the case for such children yet inclusive education is critical to benefit children with disabilities (WHO,2010). Besides, camps are normally too congested with unhealthy conditions for children among the many other likely inconveniences. Today, the remnants of the camp are still visible around town centres in northern Uganda like the case may be for other armed conflict-affected countries. There are children that continue to live in these places either in orphan-headed households or together with their parents and caregivers. Some of the factors responsible for this may include the need to continue benefiting from some of the services established by government around the camp settlements during the war period such as easy

access to safe water, education facilities and healthcare services. Others may not have had anywhere to go after being orphaned during the war coupled with persistent land conflicts that sometimes affect their former villages. Other children are enticed to stay around town centres if they are involved in any form of small income generating activity to continue to earn for their families. All these factors contribute to perpetuate poverty thereby hindering the well-being of children.



*Remnants of the camp in Gulu Municipality with some children on the extreme right (**Source**: Author, 2019)*

In addition, when children and their families gather in squalid camps, economic activities shift to the camps. The camps develop into solid commercial centers with high chances of children engaging in hazardous child labour practices to earn and contribute to put food on the table for their families. This, together with other reasons, results in children missing out on school while others struggle with poor quality teaching if this opportunity still remains available. Over and above, resources may be very limited; classrooms may be jam-packed coupled with lack of facilities. Furthermore, it is unsurprising that some children may not want to rejoin school, especially if they are in a refugee settlement because of language barriers as well as fear of missing out on so many prospects that would promote their well-being. The situation may be worse for children with disability that may receive limited attention but yet are already vulnerable. Even when a child with disability may want to access school if it exists in a camp setting, transport can

be a major limitation and at times they hardly find family members to take them to school. This was evidenced in a study conducted in Sudan and Sierra Leone (Trani et al., 2011:1190). Other notable factors that may hinder children from benefiting in education could be: no teachers because of war, abduction risk (Trani et al., 2011:1191; Amone, 2007: 642) to mention a few. Although factors discussed above may differ from location and circumstances, they are very common in war situations.

**b) Disintegration and Separation of Families**

In the subsequent paragraphs the researcher explores how families fall apart. Hall et al. (2018: 25) assert that children in Africa are most likely to live apart from both parents compared to other parts of the world such as Asia and America. The armed conflict situation never fails to disintegrate and separate families. Parents normally separate from one another and sometimes children find themselves without any of the parents /caregivers or just with one of them. Amid this scenario, some children in northern Uganda opted to live on their own as the only option. Others may just find themselves with relatives or friends that are not in any position to give them the parental care deserved. Lack of holistic care may result into lack of access to medication and a high prolonged school dropout rate.

Today, the primary school completion rate in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda is low, especially among girls. It is lower in Amuru, Nwoya, Kitgum and Gulu. It is important to remember that this study was conducted in Nwoya and Gulu districts. Such school completion rate is noted to be the third lowest in Uganda next to Teso and Bukedi regions (Economic Policy Research, the Republic of Uganda & UNICEF (2017:234; 235).

Furthermore, some relatives and non-relatives may occasionally subject children to hazardous child labour, various forms of abuse and horrific exploitation. Other people may receive children in their families and accept them because of their ability to offer labour. In doing so, violation of children's right and encroachment on their well-being happen . Moreover, this is another form of injustice. Similarly, it is unsurprising that children too may offer their labour in order to be accepted by relatives, neighbours and other persons. A similar trend may take place in a camp setting. These and many other related challenges require viable strategies to address them and adjust the quality of well-being of children, most especially the girl child and those with particular forms of disabilities.

### 3. 6. Addressing the injurious outcome of armed conflict on children

In the previous sub-sections of this chapter, we have seen how war affects children both directly and indirectly, including the multiple intolerable grave violations they experience during armed conflict. In this sub-section, the possible strategies to address the needs of children resulting from war situations are discussed. It is important to note that each country normally develops its own strategies to address the disturbing outcomes of war on children and it is worth learning from the experiences of some countries in Africa. A few strategies are highlighted in this sub-section. In addition, Save the Children, (2018; 38) recommends four collective approaches that need urgent consideration by various countries and development actors interested in the plight of children. Priority across the globe needs to be given to a strategy of preventing children from war risks, rebuilding ruined lives, upholding international standards and laws and lastly, holding violators responsible as suggested mainly by UNICEF. Below is a detailed explanation of these factors.

### a) Rebuilding ruined lives

The fact that armed conflicts leave children's lives devastated psychologically and socially as already highlighted in this chapter; there exists a need for reconstruction of their lives. Consideration under this should be irrespective of whether they have experienced war directly or indirectly. There can be multiple rebuilding strategies, including registering children and assuring them that they are no longer part of the armed forces in case they are freed child soldiers. In addition, it is paramount to assess children's needs and this could best be done when they are connected to education specialists, health workers and social workers with the necessary skills to do so in order to provide the relevant services required such as psycho-social support. Nonetheless, just assessing needs is not enough. The children may normally require reintegration with a package of items such as bedding, clothes and other basic necessities for their survival and more important, families need to be conscientised and supported in order to sustain the reintegration process. This could be some of the key approaches to rebuilding children's lives and government needs to play an instrumental role in providing extra support and protection services to the affected children (Ben-Arieh et. al., 2014: 2922; Veale, and Stavrou, 2003:6).

### b) Uphold laws and adhering to international standards

Considering children at the interface of the state and their families is very vital. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) affirms the protection of children and turns away from the historical and charitable perspective of treating them as "mini-human beings" (Hall et. al, 2018: 48). Children must be viewed as an obligation to the state and their parents if they are still living. War-affected countries need to ensure that children's rights are not violated but should remain critical on which factors render a child vulnerable. New laws and Bills are always tabled for the respective parliaments in different countries. For instance, (Hall, 2018:12) points to the Social Amendment Bill, enforcing compulsory school attendance while recognising poverty as the root cause of irregular school attendance. As well, a child care and protection policy is always in place for any country in addition to regulations on sexual offences courts. In South Africa, sexual offence complaints by children constitute 46% (Hall, 2018: 13-14) hence this remains an alarm bell for action. The situation of this nature may not be much different from other African countries but may instead be worse in underdeveloped nations. By 2018, South Africa had put in place a draft Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill. All these efforts are in the pipeline in order to benefit the children in South Africa partly because their current level of well-being is a historical factor that came as a result of their parents' experience of Apartheid. The impact of Apartheid is still felt by the present day generation. Hence international standards and laws for the well-being of children were adopted.

### c) Hold perpetrators accountable

It is critical to hold the perpetrators of human rights violations accountable. These violators can be seen at three different levels. First, when it comes to internal armed conflicts, for example, the lowest level refers to those individuals responsible for committing such a crime must be held accountable. Secondly, superiors, depending on the level of command, must be held accountable. At the third level, the state itself must be held responsible and accountable for the committed crimes and damages caused, including for those acts committed by its representatives.

To be specific, the northern Uganda case required multiple solutions to support the war-affected children. Disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration (DDR) occurred at a later stage. Children were recovered by government forces while others escaped to come back home where

over 18,000 children returned from the rebel force (Cheney, 2005:28). It should be noted that rebel life seem to have been a source of livelihood for these children and most likely their first experience of hazardous child labour (Amone, 2007:650). However, the re-integration of these children into the community seems to have occurred without any thoughtful form of sustainable support. To make matters worse, the Internal Monitoring Displacement Centre (IMDC, 2010: 24), decries a difficult process of reintegration of demobilised girls since many of them were rejected by their communities. The communities expressed fear that these girls were already associated with the LRA. In addition, some girls were unable to rejoin their families given that they too had been displaced.

Although efforts to end the war seemed to be fruitless, most especially that Joseph Kony was profoundly unreliable in signing the peace agreement under the Museveni Yoweri Kaguta government, some peace was realised in the year 1999 (Amone, 2007:641). This happened after several peace talks that also involved a number of African leaders. Kony, on several occasions, let the delegation down when a number of peace talks were arranged and he failed to turn up. One of the peace talks was in the bush of Garamba National Park in a place called Rekwangba, with the then South Sudan Vice President, Dr. Reik Machar as chief mediator. The Juba peace process held in 2009 was a ray of hope since it significantly reduced LRA hostilities against Uganda's government and its people (Amone, 2007:642).

Kony was indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes amidst all the challenges that children of the time experienced. This study focuses on children during this post – war era who seem to be marginalised given past experiences of their parents and caretakers. Had it not been war, they would probably be living a different lifestyle.

Documentation through research, monitoring and reporting on the children's suffering during and after armed conflict and the roles they played during and after the war are some of the key recommendations in order to contribute to policy development and strengthen as well as design tailor-made development programmes and projects to address the situation (United Nations, 2006). Furthermore, Von der Assen, Euwena & Cornielje, (2010) call on academic institutions and non-government organisations to conduct research and document the experiences of children with disability in conflict situations. A multi-dimensional approach is also recommended in prevention and protection, including aspects of hazardous child labour in child protection, education, health,

cash assistance and livelihood. Social integration, advocacy and awareness are highlighted as part of the Model of Action to fight the horrific exploitation of children through labour (Terres des Hommes, 2016). This study is aimed at using evidence-based findings to design an integrated approach in improving the well-being of vulnerable and marginalised children.

There is no doubt that these unjust and horrific experiences impacted negatively on the growth and development of children. To deal with the multiple sufferings, some children were eventually supported by organisations and institutions to engage in re-integration strategies to enable them to blend back in society (Cheney, 2005:29).

It should be noted that despite the long period of armed conflict, most of the affected population considered returning to their original homes while a few considered other settlement alternatives (Amone, 2007:642). IMDC (2010:28) notes that many Acholi people experienced a cultural pull of their places of origin coupled with their ties to ancestral land which continues to be very strong even among some of the children and juvenile adults who grew up in camps.

## 3.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has put to light the multiple effects of war on children, especially in an African context. From the discussion above, it is evident that African children have suffered physically, psychologically, socially, economically and in many other ways. Therefore, even if armed conflicts happen and reach an end, the need to document their impact on the current generation of children remains unquestionable given that the effects continue to unfold in more disturbing forms that they possibly happened during the active armed conflict. Although some of the children who have experienced armed conflict eventually mature into adults, their experiences continue to impact their own children and could sometimes even have a worse impact on them. Armed conflict does not impact on one generation but influences the next generations. This study questions how development study scholars can contribute to mitigating a myriad of the concomitant effects of armed conflict in order to allow children of today and their communities, especially in northern Uganda to transform their well-being sustainably.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

## 4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter discusses and details the conceptual debates concerning gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in a post-conflict context. The review analyses the study concepts with regard to post-war affected communities and presents the broader related literature on similar work done by other scholars and experts in the field. The review has substantially informed this study and follows its key themes.

It is important to remember that in Chapter One, a brief review of each of the study themes was done. This chapter gives a broader overview of the literature concerning each theme. It is also pivotal in alerting the reader to what seems to happen in a post-war family context regarding the study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. A range of sources of information is presented with the aim of assessing scholars suggestions on each of the study objectives amid scarce literature. In addition, the review emphasises information that other intellectuals have discovered in relation to the research problem besides spotting possible gaps that require attention. The literature review provides a tangible backdrop against which the results of this study are construed and conferred in Chapters Seven and Eight. The literature review is also intended for the government of Uganda and the respective line ministries, NGOs, CBOS and other development practitioners to be more mindful of how the study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability may influence each other, especially in the post-war context of Acholi sub-region. Furthermore, this literature review is also aimed at increasing the level of awareness and potential opportunities that can be explored for children with disabilities in a post-war context[13].

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[13] When disseminating findings, these key aspects of the literature review will be singled out.

The chapter begins with the conceptualisation of the study themes that were also highlighted briefly in Chapter One. The conceptual review attaches meaning to each of the themes as applied in this study.

## 4.2 Understanding key concepts

This sub-section brings to light the key concepts employed in this study as detailed below.

### 4.2.1 Conceptualisation of gender and social relations in northern Uganda

Scholars of gender make it clear that men and women in society form power relations and identities in relation to one another (Calasanti, 2010:720; Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995:8). That is to say, gender is relational. For instance, it is observed that in the gendered division of labour, mothers take on domestic roles while fathers tend to specialise in paid labour. This form of division of labour existed in traditional Uganda and it is still visible in many ordinary families where a woman is the housewife whose work is never valued in terms of money (Calasanti, 2010:721). This is likely to be a common scenario in traditional families of the Acholi sub-region where customary gender relations remain unchallenged though maybe somewhat flexible given the post-war context. The researcher notes that job payment to the primary study participants was either in cash or kind irrespective of work done. However, the work done by girls may be devalued by their informal employers that consequently leads to another level of inequality. The researcher is in disagreement with Calasanti, (2010:722) when he observes that the participation of girls in domestic work may limit their involvement in paid labour. Moreover, Article 3 is in support of equality between men and women (UNCRPD, 2006:4). In addition, chapter four of the constitution of the republic of Uganda advocates for human rights and singles out the rights of women, children and people with disabilities (Constitution of the republic of Uganda, 1995:13 ). The Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) guidelines concur to this when they emphasize that persons with disabilities have the same social needs, interests and rights as anyone else (WHO, 2010). This is one of the many ways that reflect social justice in our communities.

Zhang et al (2014:185) unveil gender relations as participation in the decision -making process at family level with regards to who is responsible for taking decisions related to resource allocation and utilisation, roles and responsibilities as well as spousal relations and behaviours. In this study, the term gender relations is used to refer to the socially and culturally determined roles expected of boys and men, and girls and women at household level. In other words, gender

relations refer to how men and women, as well as boys and girls in hazardous child labour interact with each other in society in terms of the work they do and their behaviour and attitudes in general. It also extends to mean the allocation and control of resources, and the decision-making process at household level. For instance, the researcher is in agreement with scholars who refer to a household as a single entity where resources are pooled together to benefit all its members. This study also looks at social relations and how it unfolds in a post-conflict setting of the Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda.

The study considers the above components that constitute gender relations, prioritising them together. It therefore examines gender relations in terms of roles and responsibilities, decision-making, resource allocation and utilisation as well as the attitudes, behaviour, and values that society attaches to men, women and children. It also includes the opportunities accorded to girls and boys with physical disabilities aimed at enhancing their well-being in society. It should be noted that women and girls as well as men and boys may have different experiences in connection to all these aspects, especially in a post-war setting. As well, persons with disabilities are not exceptional to the situation thus a need to incorporate a gender perspective in promoting their rights (WHO, 2010; UNCRPD,2006:2).This is partly why the study focuses on the broader social relations in the households as this influences the nature of work done by boys and girls in the work places and determine how the monetary outcomes from work is utilized. The findings of this study detailed in Chapter Seven and Eight provide a picture of the situation in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda.

### 4.2.2 Conceptualisation of hazardous child labour

Data from previous studies indicate that for many centuries, hazardous child labour has been a significant worldwide issue (Abdalla et al., 2018; 1; Mervyn, 2013:158). However, its persistence presents a threat to the human race. For instance, hazardous child labour in our time limits a child's educational opportunities and therefore, their position is undermined in society through their whole life. So, the implications are not only surfacing today but will also present themselves in the future. In Africa, hazardous child labour is traced from the family structure as highlighted in Chapter One. The existing body of research recognises the ILO for taking the first stance in 1973 by setting the minimum age for work which created a basis, and hazardous child labour is currently highly recognised as a human rights issue (Abdalla et al, 2018: 2; Bass, 2004:

06; African Charter on the rights and welfare of children, 1990) . Extensive research has shown that hazardous child labour is the order of the day in low income countries attributing its persistence to factors such as war and ethnic conflict, inequality, ineffective laws, maternal illiteracy, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, unaccountable leaders, and poverty (Abdalla et al, 2018:2; Bass, 2004: 10).

Previous studies have documented evidence on forms of hazardous child labour that are widespread in sectors such as profitable agriculture on sugar and tea farms (Dammert et al., 2017:1). As well, hazardous child labour is common in the informal sector (Abdalla et al, 2018:5) as highlighted in Chapter One. These forms of hazardous child labour seem to be very common across Africa although they may manifest at different levels depending on the country. Hazardous child labour is sometimes seen as part-time activity that is less intensive to help mothers with household chores. However, this may not be an authentic definition of hazardous child labour. For instance, during holidays and weekends in many rural Ugandan families, children engage in garden work with their parents and caretakers, fetch water from the well, and collect firewood. This involves both boys and girls. Notably, some girls remain at home to clean the compound, wash clothes and do all the work around the kitchen, including washing utensils and cooking. Such children get hands-on experience; an opportunity that is missed by their counterparts who grow up in an urban setting where most of the work is done by mainly female house helpers at a cost.

Furthermore, a few studies contend that no child work is acceptable (Bass, 2004:10) while some of them agree that certain types of work contribute highly to formal education and character formation, especially in Africa (Mervyn, 2013: 157).The researcher is in agreement with Abdalla et al., (2018:2), who observes that not all categories of work done by children need be considered as hazardous child labour except that which has a negative influence on their schooling and health. The researcher notes that almost all scholars whose work has been reviewed agree that they have been guided by ILO standards in identifying the worst forms of hazardous child labour (ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (WFCL), 1999 (No.182). This study adds a voice to the many academicians focused on addressing hazardous child labour to improve the well-being of vulnerable and marginalised children (Abdalla et al, 2018:1), including gender dimensions of

hazardous child labour that are often forgotten (Dammert et al., 2017:5). The above background sets the scene to explore specific definitions of hazardous child labour.

The researcher is in agreement with scholars that define the hazardous child labour concept to include work that disrupts schooling, harmful to a child physically, morally, socially and mentally, including work that deprives them of their childhood, dignity and potential (Abdalla et al., 2018:1; Ammendment(2016) to the Ugandan Children's Act, 1997:2; ILO IPEC, 2006: 1; Bass, 2004: 6; Basu and Van, 1998). Other scholars such as Bass (2004:7), contextualise hazardous child labour in sub-Saharan Africa and define it as work done by children of school going age that do not attend school habitually. This study ignores Bass's definition since it leaves a gap by excluding children that work and attend school simultaneously on a regular basis such as those involved in petty trade in town centres during evening hours possibly after they have attended school.

### 4.2.3 Conceptualisation of Disability

Prior to defining the term disability, it is important to begin with an understanding of the various ways of thinking about disability often referred to as models. From the historical perspective, there have been various ways of thinking about disability locally, nationally, regionally and globally. In this study, three models have been identified and explored under this sub-section, namely a) the traditional; b) medical and c) social model of disability (Goffman, 1963). Each model is explored while explaining the key important points that it tries to put across.

**The traditional way of thinking about disability**

In the traditional model, some authors affirm that in the past, children with disabilities were seen as a curse, often mistreated, neglected, feared and regarded as a misfortune (Braddock & Parish 2013:13). This is a widespread perception in many traditional cultures across regions of Uganda and other parts of Africa. Albino children in Africa are gathered at care centres for fear of harm because of certain traditional beliefs and practices. This may increase chances for rights violation including the right to personal peace and security. The researcher observed that some families in Uganda tend to hide children with disabilities and also see them as a problem. For instance, disempowering negative terminology is often used to refer to children with various forms of disabilities among many cultures and tribes, especially in Uganda. In each language, there are

terminologies or disempowering language that are used to refer to children with disabilities depending on the type of disability present. For instance, among the Ganda tribe, children with physical disabilities are referred to as '*Balema*' in plural and in singular as *'Mulema'* meaning disability. This may result in children having a very low self-esteem. Children may be withdrawn and passive, or angry and demanding. Crime against children with disabilities is also likely to be prevalent thus impacting their well-being. Field, (2009:34) and Amendment (2016) to the Ugandan Childrens' Act, 1997:5 concur that such practice is another way of discrimination against children based on their disability. For instance, babies born with disabilities may be allowed to die and those with albinism may be killed for body parts to use in witchcraft or traditional medicine, as believed in some cultures. The latter has been witnessed as a practice in some African countries such as rural Tanzania and Uganda.

The experts in this model are the people who say that they know how to protect society from the curse of disability such as the traditional healers. They preach the gospel that if a child is born with disability it means that the traditional gods are displeased with its parents and that chances are higher that they will give birth to more children with disabilities. Such parents are advised to appease the traditional gods by sacrificing livestock such as cows, goats and sheep and local poultry birds such as chicken. Treatment in the form of traditional herbs for smearing and rubbing on the body are given to their clients and another treatment consists of an oral solution to deal with the so-called misfortune. Similarly, herbs are also given to those that acquire a particular form of disability at any time in their life. This practice is common in many cultures in Uganda.

This traditional way of thinking means that the mainstream organisation or community will not involve children with disabilities or make services available to them but these children will mostly be kept hidden except when being taken to the traditional healers. Some parents/caretakers end up spending days at a traditional shrine as directed by the traditional healer in order to wait for the healing of a child.

Now the researcher explores the second way of thinking about disability known as the medical model.

**The medical way of thinking about disability**

In the medical model[14], disability is viewed as a medical problem that requires attention by medical professionals who will provide modern medicine (WHO,2010). The belief here is that children are sick and their medical problem should be cured through medical intervention using medicines, surgery or physiotherapy. The child with disability is seen as a problem since the medical model defines them by their disabilities. It seems that this model does not view them as children or human beings and pays less attention to their other needs. A shift from the traditional to the medical way of thinking may often be seen as progress, but the medical way of thinking is habitually still stuck in segregation and charity to children with disabilities. For instance, children with disabilities may be displayed in fundraising images. As a result, such children could feel powerless display very low self-esteem. Such practices are thus contrary to the principles of non-discrimination and respect for difference and acceptance of children with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity stipulated in Article 3 and 7 (UNCRPD, 2006:4-7).

Furthermore, the power over children with disabilities seems to be concentrated in the hands of non-disabled experts such as medical practitioners, parents and caretakers. Although development practitioners and people in a community context may attach value to the contribution of rehabilitation in the lives of children with disabilities, this is not the human rights way of thinking about these children. This thinking seems to only fulfill the health-related needs of children (WHO, 2010; WHO, 2017:21). Although organisations such as World Health Organisation in its community based rehabilitation guidelines puts emphasis on advocacy for inclusive medical care and rehabilitation services, this does not mean being irrational to persons with disablilities. There is a danger that this medical way of thinking defines children with disabilities by their health-related needs to the exclusion of all other considerations and restrictions to enable them to participate in society according to those needs. Some of these children with

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14 Also see Kaplan (2000). Pg.353 reflecting how the medical model developed in the nineteenth century with a view that many disabilities have a medical origin. It is believed that the problem is within the individual and once healed; there will be no problem anymore. As children with a disability wait to be cured, the belief is that society does not have a role to play. This way of thinking adds to the vulnerability of children in society and incapacitates them.

disabilities may get better treatment than others from society. For example, from experience, the researcher notes that in her local community, visually impaired people are often considered to be "clean", whereas physical disability is associated with being dirty. The doctors, physiotherapists and other medical personnel seem to be the experts in this model as they rarely ask for the opinions from children with disabilities or caretakers but rather play their role of providing treatment. The lack of consultation of children with disabilities for opinion is contrary to general obligation number 3 under Article 4 where active involvement of children with disabilities and close consultatation with them is emphasized as being critical (UNCRPD, 2006:15). Thus, the vulnerabilities caused by the traditional and medical models on children with disabilities are immense and may be worse in a post-war context where children are already faced with other multiple vulnerabilities, especially the girl child.

Based on the shortcomings of both the traditional and medical ways of thinking about disability, a social model was developed. It is important to explore its key points.

**The social way of thinking about disability**

In recent times some enlightened development practitioners started looking at disability as a social phenomenon and thus the social model emerged from the disability rights movement in the 1970s (ILO, 2013: 22; Sullivan, 2011: 2; Consulting Altai, 2004). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities evokes a rights based and development approach (UNCRPD, 2006). The world health organisation concurs through its community based rehabilitation guidelines where a 'twin-truck' approack is emphasized in order to achieve inclusive development namely; a) working with persons with disabilities to develop their capacity, address their specific needs, ensure equal opportunities and rights, and facilitate them to become self-advocates. b) working with the community and society at large to remove barriers that exclude persons with disabilities, and ensuring the full and effective participation of all persons with disabilities in all development areas, on an equal basis with others (WHO, 2010). The researcher notes that the social model has a human rights perspective whereby different forms of disability are taken as a normal human life condition. Article 13 emphasies that children with disabilities are considered to have the same rights as others ( African Charter on the rights and welfare of children, 1990). It is up to society to make sure that they can participate as fully as the non-disabled children. In this model, disability is a concern for everyone in the community; all children and their communities

have the same rights and have equal access to everything that goes on in the community. This model puts emphasis on equal rights, inclusion, access, responsibilities, involvement and citizenship. Article 3 affirms the importance of this aspect (African charter on the rights and welfare of the child, 1990: 2). Society, not the child, has the problem and therefore it should ensure that children with disabilities are fully included and that they are rights-bearers.  In this case, the public authorities and all service providers are duty-bearers. Like every other child, children with disabilities have health-related needs, but as children they are defined by their general human nature, not by their medical condition and are equal citizens. In addition, children with disabilities have the same protection under the law as their able-bodied counterparts.

It is interesting and fulfilling that under this model children with disabilities are understood to be the experts on their own needs and requirements. This implies that NGOs, CBOs, government ministries and other bodies need to consult with children with disabilities and also with their caretakers. It is important to note that this is a phenomenological study exploring the lived experiences of children with physical disabilities, specifically those trapped in hazardous child labour. More about this in Chapter Five, with regard to the methodology for this study.

The policy environment prohibits discrimination against children with disabilities; they are able to participate in societal activities on an equal basis with their non-disabled counterparts, hence with high self-esteem. Children are likely to be more confident and assertive and act with ease. With equal rights and responsibilities, children with disabilities may be more visible at different levels in their communities given that emphasis is placed on access and inclusion for all children.

It should be noted that the above mentioned three ways of thinking about disability are significant because the way we think informs how we act, what we do, and what our priorities are. Even if we hold a very open attitude, we need to understand more traditional ones, because we may come across them, and need to counteract them, in our work with children and in our daily lives. Therefore, one needs to recognise the variety of meanings given to disability in the above theoretical models.

Scholars such as Thompson (2017:2) contend that there is no single description that adequately defines disability.  However, disability is defined by some scholars as a situation related

to a physical condition, health or injury creating limitations that last for a given period of not less than twelve months (UNCRPD, 2006). It may occur in an occupation where a child performs hazardous duties such as mining, or active military service among others. Other scholars such as Lang (2010:23) defines it as a severe chronic condition. For example, being blind, lame, or having a mental impairment, to mention a few.

In the context of this study, disability refers to the physical form of impairment that children have lived with for a period of not less than one year. These boys and girls were aged 10-17 at the time of the study and were working to earn a living in various forms of hazardous child labour; an aspect that adds to their vulnerability. The study does not include any other type of disability but considers children with physical disabilities even when they have other forms of disabilities (multiple disabilities). It should be noted that Article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that children with disabilities must enjoy a full and decent life, dignity as well as active participation in the community (UN Convention, 1989:7; UNCRPD,2006:2).

In this study we note that disability is also brought about by environmental factors such as exclusion and denial of reasonable accommodation as well as the undue burden pressed on children with disabilities in post-conflict situations thus causing double vulnerability (UNCRPD, 2006:4).

### 4.2.4 Conceptualisation of Post-Conflict

Throughout history, conflicts have occurred across the globe and in Africa in the form of civil wars (Kwasi and Collier, 2005:16). To this effect, Article 22 advocates for the protection of children during armed conflict  (African Charter on the rights and welfare of children, 1990). For the case of Uganda, there has been a minimum of one conflict each decade (Kwasi and Collier, 2005:22) and people have had difficulty coping with their own resources given the serious disruption to the functioning of society in terms of human, material and environmental losses (Berman, et al., 2016: 5). Richmond (2017:52) defines post-conflict in three different ways. First, the scholar refers to it as a time when open warfare has ceased through either military victory or a peace agreement. Further, Richmond describes post-conflict as a situation where a formal peace agreement is in existence and lastly, when in military terms one party has been defeated by way of a regime collapse like in the case of Libya where Muammar Gadaffi's administration lost in 2011. The researcher disagrees with the last two definitions as these seem to water down the use of the concept of post-conflict. This study therefore uses the first definition referring to post conflict in

74

northern Uganda where warfare is absent today. The majority of the people are settled back in their original homesteads, security seems to prevail and sector reform is taking place (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:69). Demobilisation and reintegration occurred and natives are able to engage in elections (Kwasi and Collier, 2005:265). The building of economic institutions is a high priority together with a number of development programmes (Mehuset al., 2018: 4). Reconciliation and transitional justice programs ('Ubuntu') continue to happen in the traditional societal setting in northern Uganda. In all this, it is important to remember persons with disabilities that are most affected by armed conflict and continue to experience the impact during post –conflict. Such negative impact includes poverty brought about by the war on persons with disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006:3).

### 4.2.5 Applications of the Well-being Theory in some studies

Well-being refers to objective values where children are able to get what they want and feel satisfied in society. It is one of the central aims in life. The theory will be discussed in detail in sub-section 5.3 of Chapter Five. The theory of well-being has been applied successfully in research for instance in Peru and Bangladesh (Gough and McGregor, 2007:26). The aim was to explore the relationship between resources that households have and their level of needs satisfaction. A research instrument known as Resources and Needs Questionnaire[15] (RANQ) was applied (McGregor, McKay &Velazco, 2007). The RANQ was also applied in countries such as Ethiopia, Thailand, Peru and Bangladesh to measure subjective well-being using a personal life goal satisfaction approach [16](Copestake & Camfield, 2009). Some of the major findings revealed that participants that live in urban areas often achieved a higher state of well-being. People achieved personal goals and needs as a result of societal cultural values. The well-being theory is contextualised to fit the situation of children in northern Uganda targeted by this study.

Interestingly, over a ten year period, Senefeld et al., (2009), piloted and employed the well-being approach repeatedly through a self- administered questionnaire in war-affected communities

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[15] A tailor-made designed tool to assess the needs and resources of an individual or community in an attempt to understand their well-being

[16] A tool used to measure well-being in terms of achieved goals, mood, satisfaction with relationships and ability to cope with daily life

in countries such as, Haiti, Vietnam and on the African continent in the post-war context of Rwanda that relates more to the current study in northern Uganda (Bohl et al., 2018; Senefeld et al., 2009:10). The organisation developed an easy to use well-being tool that is age appropriate and a valid and reliable measure for well-being that clearly enunciates the child's perspective. Notably, the well-being tool has been applied in emergency responses and recovery programming and tailored to situations of the work of Senefeld et al., (2009) and Senefeld et al., (2011). The work includes but not limited to peace and justice, agriculture, health and education thereby ensuring human dignity for better living standards (Senefeld et al., 2009:9). This study has a strong connection to the aforementioned aspects as it attempts to address issues of social justice for the already vulnerable children with disabilities and trapped in hazardous child labour mainly in the mining and agricultural sector.

**4.3 The nature of gender relations in households with children with physical disability in informal employment in a post -war context**

In our conceptualisation of the theme "gender relations" at the beginning of this chapter, we have seen how gender relations refer to spousal relations, attitudes, behaviours and values that society attach to women and girls, and men and boys. We have also learnt that it involves roles and responsibilities and decision making in resource allocation and utilisation (Mehus et al., 2018: 5). This sub-section takes into consideration the key stakeholders at household level, namely children and parents/caretakers with regards to the above highlighted key components of gender relations in a post-war context.

First, like peaceful societies, most war-affected communities, especially in Africa belong to cultures that are patriarchal in nature with solid social tribal combinations. People in these societies follow their customs and have a particular way of life, beliefs and practices that are highly valued even after the war experience. Spousal relations, roles and responsibilities, decision-making powers, resource allocation and utilisation are anchored in these values of a given society. This sub-section explores these aspects of gender relations with examples of practices that occur in war-torn countries.

**Spousal Relations and Behaviours**

There is ample literature on spousal relations violence in a post-war context (Cools and Kotsdam, 2017:238). In an observational study conducted at Gulu Regional Hospital in the Acholi sub-region during the early post-conflict period of 2008-2009, domestic violence by men against poor rural women is noted to have cut across economic and social ranks with the age bracket 20-29 being the most affected. Violence manifested in the form of torture, battering and assault of housewives by mostly soldiers and "bodaboda" (motorcycle riders). The causes of domestic violence such as one partner finding a new spouse and abandoning the other, sexual disagreement, failure to provide food, and perceived HIV status were most common (Kitala et al, 2012; 1-10). The perpetrators were noted to have taken alcohol mainly between midday and evening. Body parts such as limbs and the chest were most injured (Kitala et al, 2012: 11-30). I agree that this trend as a result of the war seems to linger and is evident from physical violence extending to other forms of violence such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and psychological violence that have been affirmed as being part of the post-war experience at present, and which

are broadly speaking consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder (Ottisova et al., 2018). Women and children are vulnerable to the above disorder after a war. For instance, they struggle to forget that they have been in near-death situations to cope with loss of their loved ones and the struggle for family survival. Psychological trauma fills the lives of female refugees in their own country and the impact could even be worse for those who migrate to other countries as they try to settle. It is unimaginable how detrimental these situations could be on the lives of girl children with disabilities.

In countries such as Iraq, Yemen and Congo the war effects on women and children are multiple. In many other African countries such as Uganda, Rwanda and Sudan, women get raped, are faced with sexual slavery as tactics of warfare and all sorts of atrocities seem to get committed in relation to women. There exists a need for strategies to address this violation. Efforts have been made to award key activists. For instance, The Nobel Peace Prize for 2018 was awarded to Denis Mukwenge[17] and his co-recipient Nadia Murad[18] for their efforts to end sexual violence as a weapon of armed conflict and war[19]. It is therefore noted that sexual slavery of women and girls in war-torn regions is rampant (Suarez, 2011; Ottisova et al., 2018). It is vital to imagine the fate of children with disabilities whose parents encounter such violations. The well-being of such children is compromised as their parents undergo such experiences to the extent that parents may also get injured and end up with particular forms of disabilities. As parents get admitted to hospitals when injured, the chances are high that children will have to become the bread winners for the family.

Furthermore, the researcher observes that war usually accompanies poverty. Wright and Hall (2010:60) point to the poverty experienced by war-affected parents and caretakers as the key driver of the hazardous child labour discourse. This view is also affirmed when Mervyn (2013:156) demonstrates that poverty is a more common element of war. The affected

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[17] A world- renowned Congolese gynecologist specialised in treatment of women raped by armed rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Also see https://www.mukwegefoundation.org/story/dr-denis-mukwege/

[18] An Iraqi national and human Rights Activist, a leading advocate for survivors of genocide and sexual violence

[19] See Norwegian Nobel Committee announcement, 2018 at *https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2018/press-release/*

parents/caretakers seem to send children with physical disabilities into informal employment in order to contribute to family income and meet the family's needs thus adding to their vulnerability. Moreover, violent parents are most likely to continue using violence as they continue to experience high poverty (Wright and Hall, 2010:65). In such situations, children of such violent parents are likely to escape and find alternatives to earn a living, and more so in cases where parents have failed to provide food and other basic needs. It should be noted that Article 16 of the African Charter on the rights and welfare of children (1990) advocates for protection against child abuse and torture.

### Resource allocation and utilisation

In many African countries that have experienced conflict, the relationship to resources such as land is instrumental to achieve a livelihood (Naseem, 2013:59). This could possibly curb the incidence of child labour. Bakuluki et al (2013:92) asserts that ownership of property in many of such communities is patrilineal. The family may disown the widow to make sure that property such as land is entrusted in the hands of a male adult who is a close relative to the deceased (Kitala et al, 2012: 35). With this practice, a number of women get evicted from their homes, and land and possessions are taken away. There is no doubt that the presence of any children with physical disabilities in such families adds to their vulnerability. On a positive note, in South Sudan, people have local land rights and are careful of transferring land to private individuals to cause conflict Deng K.D (2013:1).

However, this is different from Uganda where land is owned by private individuals. In addition, South Africa is one of the countries that has made efforts in land reform since 1994 (National Land Policy, 2019). It is noted that land is largely owned by the white people while majority of the landless are black South Africans living in unsustainable areas thus being in automatic exclusion from participating in sustainable agriculture. This disastrous situation is not exclusive of women and children with disabilities. It evidently reflects a social justice gap in land allocation. However, it is encouraging to note that of recent, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform published a new national policy on land redistribution for equitable access (Clark, 2019). Although the redistribution criteria are clearly stated, this does not rule out possible implementation gaps in the system that may require continued advocacy.

Some scholars point to power and wealth as crucial factors in the choice of a marriage

partner (ISJR, 2011; 24). During war in northern Uganda, families were robbed of their livestock which were essential in payment of dowry. A man could marry more than one wife based on his animal wealth (Mehus et al., 2018: 10). The researcher observed that despite the absence of large animal herds, elements of polygamy are common in northern Uganda today. Polygamy can be frustrating for women since it leads to an increased number of children. It will therefore be harder to meet their needs and there is a higher likelihood of abandoning those children with disabilities. This is likely to increase chances of children being enticed by and eventually getting trapped into hazardous child labour. The access, control and utilisation of resources in post-war communities seem to benefit men rather than women.

**Roles and responsibilities**

The researcher observed from experience that it is through culture that African societies have a number of perceived gender stereotypes relating to women and girls, and men and boys. The perceptions of gender roles seem to be influenced by gender stereotypes hence shaping the different roles boys and girls play in war-affected societies (Sweetman, 2005:3). This also seems to determine the opportunities accorded to boys and girls, including those with physical disabilities and engaged in informal employment. Spence & Buckner, (2000) and Bem, (1994) claim that stereotypes maintain that women/girls are weak and lazy, submissive, dependent, fearful, tender, passive, indecisive, emotional, home-oriented nurturing and are not aggressive while giving an impression that men/boys are aggressive, strong, hardworking, dominant, independent, logical, decisive, active, tough, and analytical; don't cry easily and so on. These stereotypes perpetuate gender inequality and seem to vary depending on society, type of work, location and culture (Sweetman, 2005: 2). For instance, young boys may believe that typical female chores such as cleaning and cooking are only performed as a way of helping their parents and that role socialisation identity is mainly seen in household chores. In this study, the researcher notes that the gender stereotypes are likely to intensify conflict in society and add to the vulnerability of the already marginalised children. These factors therefore need to be challenged with renewed energy, especially during times of armed conflict (Sweetman, 2005:7). Certainly, the study ought to explore whether participants in a post-war situation of northern Uganda hold any stereotypes that are similar or different from the listing above and how these influence roles in hazardous child labour and how they relate to disability.

80

Additionally, prior to experiencing war, people's perceptions of gender relations are most likely to be pre-defined, especially in an African male-dominated society. Generally, gender roles are learned through a process of socialisation, especially at family and local community level. Boys and girls are groomed to execute given responsibilities as they mature. It should be noted that these gender roles differ from one community to another and from one culture to another, by country and by region although there may be similarities as Terres des Hommes, (2016) and the United Nations, (2006) point out. It is most likely that these shaped roles may continue to shift and may differ among boys and girls in post-war situations such as northern Uganda where men were deprived of their land and livestock. This made it difficult since they could not have access to these resources. Meanwhile, women's roles remained unchanged as they occur at household level, including the IDP camp setting. Sweetman (2005:3) observes that conflict is a gendered experience. For instance, it is interesting when the ISJR (2011: 10) asserts that volatile wars for over half a century was helpful to women in South Sudan. Their place in society got transformed given the earlier passive roles communities had prescribed for women. These women together with children only got accepted if they played a role supporting the continuation of male supremacy. It is possible that in some of the war torn countries in Africa, the conflicts made it feasible for re-thinking the societal order and re-organising social roles (Sweetman, 2005:3). For instance, traditionally, women are mandated to be main caregivers for their children whereas, husbands are to provide for their wives, care for livestock, cultivate the farm and build houses (ISJR, 2011:26). These roles for women remain almost the same as before, during and after the war while the roles of men seem to change. Men mostly engage in various ways of betting around the camp because of fear of being abducted.

Scholars go beyond and trace the role of women in the freedom struggles in countries such as Liberia and South Sudan where they took on important supportive roles in armed forces, worked as nurses, teachers, farmers, nurtured children and generally ensured the well-being of their families (ISJR, 2011: 13). Some scholars note enlarged vulnerability of women in a post-war era due to altered gender roles that seem to result in psychosomatic distress, as men seem to switch roles and others become jobless (Mehus et al., 2018: 4). Such consequences are most likely to be extended to the entire family members, including children. For instance, men's roles seem to change as many of them join forces or even search for employment. Northern Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo are cited where women found themselves in new

roles as household heads (ISJR, 2011:27). On the contrary, (Sweetman, 2005:3) asserts that women are not 'angels in the house'. This means that women can also make effort to find work for payment. Women may therefore work outside the home in order to fill the vacuum left by spouses. Women may gain independence while these solid power dynamics affect their marital relations.

Furthermore, the ILO (2009) points out that in economic activities, girls do as much as boys but are expected to dedicate more time to household tasks and refers to it as a ''double burden''. Therefore, girls combine household work obligations as expected by society and economic activities for their survival, which puts them at a disadvantage. Women and girls are suppressed which certainly results in internalised oppression as girls mature. It seems to continue when girls in a post-war context are involved in hazardous child labour thereby creating possible room for further exploitation and even worse consequences for children already with disabilities (Amendment (2016) to the Ugandan Childrens' Act, 1997:5:. This aspect was observed prior to the study and informed its focus.

**Decision-making**

In many African families, the authority within families rotates around men and so are the decision-making powers on all important issues. Women are expected to conform to what men say even when these are young boys. Women and children's roles rotate around the kitchen, food cultivation, collection of water and firewood, care for the family and to be sexually accessible for their partners besides bearing children which is regarded as their major role. Many women in countries such as South Sudan have no choice on how many children they want to have and the family planning contraceptives may not be com monly known or preferred by all (ISJR, 2011:26). This illustrates how researchers may ignore the gender-specific needs of women and girls, especially the disabled that are at the same time trapped into hazardous child labour in a post-war context (Sweetman, 2005:4). In the case of separation or divorce, the children are meant to remain with their father or with their paternal grandfather to carry on with the family lineage. Surprisingly, in countries such as Sudan, if a woman is to re-marry, the new husband must pay dowry to the original husband even in a post-war context (ISJR 2011: 26).

**4.4 The relationship between hazardous child labour and disability in the post -war context**

A review of the literature conducted by the ILO on disability and hazardous child labour shows that very few studies have explored the connection between the two themes and that the two are complex to investigate (ILO, 2011:3). On the other hand, Abdallah et.al (2018:23) affirm having conducted a study in low and middle income countries with results showing a strong relationship between the two factors. For instance, a number of children in Bangladesh were confirmed to have been physically assaulted while in hazardous child labour and they acquired permanent physical disabilities. Another case in point is Iran where children could fall from heights while doing house construction and remained with permanent physical disabilities (Abdallah et. al., (2018-24). This affirms a strong connection despite lack of clear data on the estimate number of children sustaining physical disabilities. UNICEF (2014) is in agreement with this when they note that data relating to children with disabilities living in a humanitarian crisis and in emergency situations are extremely rare and almost unavailable. However, with particular reference to Uganda, although data on disability are unreliable, three in a hundred children are injured in conflict and acquire permanent disability (UNICEF, 2014). This leaves out figures of children who acquired the disabilities while in hazardous child labour during and after armed conflict. In addition, worldwide estimates show that about 80% of people with disabilities live in conditions of long-term poverty with about one million poor people with disabilities in Uganda; that is 1.2%. In other words, one out of ten Ugandans who live in abject poverty is a person with disability and 72% of people with disabilities are noted to live in chronic poverty (UNICEF, 2014). The number of children with disabilities living in such situations can be estimated by the number of parents, though a gap remains.

In Uganda, visual and physical disabilities, loss of hearing, mental disability, multiple disabilities and autism, in this order, are prevalent. The highest rate were noted among students in secondary schools in the year 2010. Children with multiple disabilities are noted to be less likely to attend school in Uganda (UNICEF, 2014). This increases the risk of this category of children engaging in some form of labour.

Furthermore, in 2009 to 2011, the northern region of Uganda is noted to have had the highest number of children with disabilities, especially at pre-primary school level (24%), 21% in the east, 20% in the west, 19% in south west and 5% in the north east region while the central

region is generally noted to have the highest number of children with disabilities (34%) at secondary school level (UNICEF, 2014).

On the whole, children with disabilities in Uganda are noted to have a lower school enrolment rate compared to the average child. Thus, this study targets children with physical disabilities involved in hazardous child labour. It is noted that 28% of children with disabilities have never been to school and 20% of these live in poor households in Uganda. Very few boys and girls with disabilities in Uganda attend school and finish primary school level while fewer attend secondary school and complete (UNICEF, 2014). To the researcher, this is indicative of possibly hazardous child labour coupled with the general view that very few children with disabilities enrol and stay in school compared to the total number. What happens to these children with physical disabilities once they have dropped out of school or even when they do not attend school, especially in the northern Uganda in the light of the African context where the perceptions of people inform their actions towards children with disabilities? This then calls attention to a number of cultural, social, physical, economic and structural barriers which deny children with disabilities access to services and opportunities (UNHCR, 2015). Scholars note that social exclusion and the financial burden on an individual and family is a result of vulnerability and poverty which is accelerated by disability (Trani & Cannings, 2013). The needs of children with disabilities can be identified through coordination of family units and community structures (Akhidenor, 2007). This study will take a community approach in identifying children with physical disabilities and constrained in hazardous child labour as one of the strategies for their inclusion.

Furthermore, although people may claim to have no attitudinal problems towards children with disabilities, in this study the researcher observed a form of perception in the way these children are verbally abused through name-calling, including referring to them as half-human, useless, needy, half-body, not complete, weak among others. Some studies reveal that able-bodied children are the major perpetrators of these negative aspersions against their disabled counterparts (Consulting Altai, 2014). It is most likely that these perceptions determine the way children with disabilities are treated in families and post-war communities may not be an exception. When treated unfairly yet already vulnerable, any child with disability is likely to find a copying mechanism such as earning through labour. This is so if it is the best alternative available for them

84

to gain autonomy and to be able to sustain themselves.

Based on the above literature, there seems to be a relationship between hazardous child labour and disability subject to confirmation in a post-war context such as that of northern Uganda. Culture and gender dimensions when explored serve to enrich the study making it viable to draw relevant conclusions and recommendations.

## 4.5 The impact of the existing social justice system on hazardous child labour among physically disabled children in post-war regions

Shriberg et al (2008:454) advises that research involving children should passionately endorse social justice in their lives. This view is affirmed by Maia and Cal (2014:63) who concur by urguing that problems of recognition of children in informal employment largely remain poorly understood despite the existence of a social justice theory that embraces the principles of promoting human rights and dignity of children. It is important to cherish social justice for children in informal employment, especially the disabled in order to prevent or address issues of gross violation of their rights in war torn countries. Uganda and South Africa as well as other countries that have experienced multiple violations of children's rights during war and Apartheid need to embrace social justice. The absence of social justice is an indicator of the violation of children's rights and the reverse is true. Such a situation means subjugation of already disadvantaged children. At times, children may experience social injustices and take it lightly because of ignorance regarding existing protective policies.

International documents such as the ILO Convention requires ratifying states to pursue a comprehensive national policy to eliminate hazardous child labour and to set minimum age levels for admission to employment, and for light and hazardous work. The minimum age set by this legislation should not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling, and not be less than 15 years for employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young people. While the recognised minimum age is 15, there are exceptions. According to Article 2.4, Ratifying states *"whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may, after consultation with the relevant worker and employer organizations where such exist, initially specify a minimum age of 14"*( CRC, 1989). Special conditions apply in such cases. No child below the age of 18 shall be engaged in work "which by

its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young persons" (CRC, 1989).

Regarding light work (Article 7), "National laws or regulations permit the employment or work of persons 13 to 15 years of age for "light work" as long as such work does not threaten their health or development, or interrupt or harm their education, vocational orientation, or training programmes. Even though these international instruments are not perfectly harmonious, together they offer consensus on what activities are inappropriate for children; social rights for children, particularly in relation to employment; and what steps nations need to take to guarantee that the interests of children are defended. This is one way of promoting social justice, especially for children with disabilities in war-affected countries.

In addition, armed conflict can impact the capacity of children and families to achieve adequate nutrition. First, armed conflict interrupts the regional atmosphere and economy. Sweetman (2005:24) affirms that in Sierra Leone and northern Uganda, children, especially girls were deprived of adequate food and large numbers of them became ill and disabled while others died. This could have been a result because conflict might have disordered crop growing; food production and market availability, and blown up food prices, thus upsetting the capacity of families to obtain food products. The presence of these factors in a post-war context is likely to be a driving factor into hazardous child labour, especially when children have no other alternatives. In addition, conflict may also change the family environment and interactions, which impact child nutrition because when a mother is stressed, it is hard to feed her children. Therefore, the absence of good nutrition may result in physical disabilities with children getting more affected.

**4.6 The Status of Well-being of child labourers with physical disabilities in Post- War regions**

Dalyot and Dalyot (2017: 187) note that information on children's well-being is available but the measure of well-being may largely depend on how a researcher or an institution defines the concept. The researcher observes that in relation to this study, data on the well-being of children with physical disabilities seem to be scarce. Dalyot and Dalyot (2017: 187) point to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a major orientation for well-being of scholars and base it on different definitions and dimensions. Reference is also made to the Western replica of childhood; a notion that children be restricted from the adult world (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:2445). They assert that today well-being is checked and specified in a very unfair and insufficient way for understanding the differences in the environment in which children live and grow. The satisfactoriness in the level of children's well-being could be easily evaluated based on their country and status without standardisation for the developed and developing world. This may also apply to children with physical disabilities compared to their able-bodied counterparts. This would then form a basis for a collective edifice on factors affecting the well-being of children around the world. This requires an understanding of well-being as a broader concept by contextualising it based on child care and protection policies that exist in each of the post-war contexts.

Furthermore, some scholars assert that ideally, educational investigations should be directed at the holistic development of children (Pillay, 2014:196; Covell, Howe & McNeil, 2010). This is an important point worth noted by well-being researchers so that the hindering factors can be amalgamated to have more meaningful interventions regarding children's well-being. A number of scholars commend and have involved children in research that concern them as one way of promoting their well-being by considering them as key partners in the process. Maia and Cal, (2014: 65) observe that this practice also shapes the way children such as the disabled and those trapped in harzadeous labour perceive themselves. Scholars are in favour of individual and focus group interviewss interviews that should be used in tandem with each other (Dalyot and Dalyot, 2017:188: Freeman et al., 2016; 163: Pollard and Lee, 2003:60; Hill et al. 1996:133).

However, it was noted that, many of the studies conducted have interviewed children in urban settings and none has any mention of the status of the well-being of working children with disabilities. This study covers the gap by considering children in both rural and urban setting,

moreover in a post-war context. Making an allowance for their active participation is considered paramount in this study in order to amplify their voices and increase their chances of being heard to result in better interventions.

## 4.7 The perceived links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in Post-War affected communities

Limited information exists on the links between the three study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability yet they are all critical and pose challenges in development practice. However, in one case Sweetman (2005:23) demonstrates how children with hearing impairments were abducted in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone and were made to run errands for breastfeeding mothers and take care of young children. This scenario affirms the existing relationship between the three study themes and the likely dangers. If not well addressed, these three dimensions may continue to intermingle and negatively affect the well-being of children, their families and communities, more so in a post-war context. Thus, it is fundamental to address them and thereby ensure the respect for children's rights and wishes even when war or conflict has impacted on their communities. As far as is known, this study is the first of its kind that explores the existing link between the three themes, moreover in a post-war environment. Other studies have been conducted on either one or two themes separately. The study's contribution fills the mentioned existing gap in academia and development practice in general.

**4.8 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter is an exploration of the information already documented with regard to the study themes in line with each of the study objectives. However, there is generally paucity of information and most of the literature does not have much connection to children trapped in hazardous child labour who are at the same time with disabilities in a post-war environment. There are possible reasons for this status quo. This thesis intends to fill the gap**.** This chapter has also attached meaning to each study concept and how these are applied in this study while highlighting the key definitions of each concept as put forward by other scholars. Gough and McGregor (2007:289) explain that conceptual frameworks are meant to guide exploratory empirical research, especially when nothing much is known about a particular problem. The conceptual contribution of this study is clearly detailed in sub-section 1.4.2 in Chapter One.
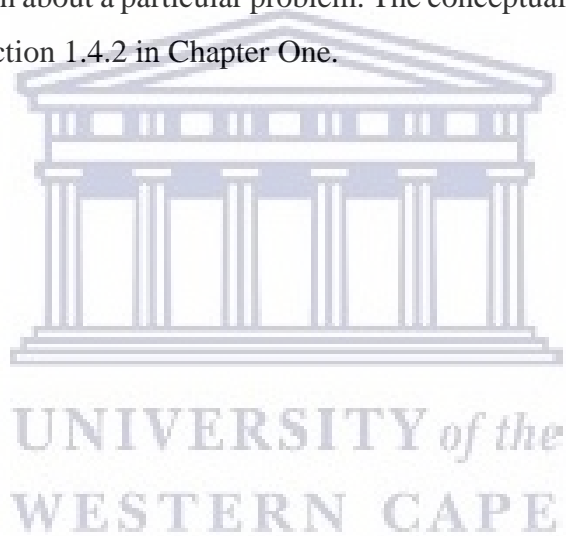
## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter discusses the major theoretical approaches that are critical in analysing the empirical findings. Phillips and Pittman (2009) and Ritzer (1990) write comprehensively on theories and define them as elucidations, models or metaphors that can ably present an understanding of people's lives and a structure from which researchers and development practitioners can explicate and analyse data. In addition, theories are a set of substantive proposals for understanding and explaining issues relating to themes, variables, cases, structures or mechanisms (Gough and McGregor, 2007: 289). This chapter therefore introduces us to the relevant theories for this study.

### An overview of the theoretical perspectives

Scholars have identified and discussed various theoretical perspectives concerning the three study themes of gender relations (Flax, 1987; Eagly, 1987), hazardous child labour and physical disability. However, given that the three concepts are multidimensional, this study specifically considers a theory that is multifaceted in nature. The well-being theoretical approach is engaged to explain multifaceted dimensions in analysing empirical results given the cross-cutting nature of the key study themes. Notably, social justice is an additional approach employed to set out a broad context of progressive ideas. A critical understanding of the context of the social justice system is vital in discussing the well-being of children. This is part of the motivation for also considering the social justice theory in this research about vulnerable children. A social justice approach is employed because it consists of ideas which promote social redistribution, equal rights and the fact that it embraces the idea that it is the social responsibility of the state to ensure the well-being of its people. This is likely to bring about fairness, promote equality and realisation of children's rights. The children with physical disabilities in this study are already a marginalised group moreover trapped in harzadeous labour which makes life more complicated for them. Therefore, children deserve equal and fair treatment in society irrespective of their identity as children with physical disabilities and are entitled to human rights that include children's rights. Consequently, by analysing the study findings using firstly, the idea of well-being informed by a

broad notion of the social justice approach will bring to light the gaps that require to be addressed for the plight of children of northern Uganda. This can create a frame for positive change in the Acholi sub-region based on the lessons learnt from the study findings.

In addition, despite physical, cultural or identity differences, the principles of equity and equal access is essential in enhancing opportunities for all, thus benefiting children that would eventually be a country's future leaders. Children need to learn from the practices they see today.

The motivation behind using the well-being theory in this study stems from the fact that children need to live a flourishing life and enjoy their childhood. They do not need to be subjected to circumstances of acting like adults; trying to fend for themselves and their families and being or working in hazardous conditions. Moreover, children who experience low well-being are likely to have very low self-esteem and not able to progress in society. Therefore, understanding children's well-being in this study opens ways of empowering them to realise their full potential and possibly have a voice that demands their social responsibility from society and the state in reviving the lives of children in post-war northern Uganda. Therefore, the researcher proposes that using the conceptual frameworks of the well-being approach within a social justice framework will offer the best opportunity of assessing the ways in which disability, gender and hazardous child labour intersect to shape the well-being and social opportunities of the research participants; that is children with physical disabilities.

This study contextualises the well-being domains to suit child study participants of the Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda. It focuses on eight domains that Senefeld et al., (2009) have previously worked on while investigating the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children in the post-war context. To elucidate, these include; a) food and nutrition that implies search into the availability of enough nutritious food and whether children go to bed hungry; b) spirituality, support from a child's faith community; c) physical shelter; d) protection to imply whether children are treated differently from other children at home and in the community; e) education to explore their reasons for dropping out of school despite the existence of Universal Primary and Secondary Education programmes; f) economic opportunities such as a child's contribution to the family; g) whether a child feels supported by the family and h) whether community cohesion exists and a child feels part of his/her community. Pauw and Gilmore (2011) are in agreement with the well-being domains when they point to resources that people are able to command, as well as to their

needs and goals, while (McGregor (2007) argues that these components are shaped by society and social collectivity. The assessment of the above domains is one way of finding out how the children involved in this study construct and understand their well-being.

Shockingly, children are faced with cultural constraints that present a hindrance to their capabilities. The possibility of accessing opportunities may also be very limited. It should be noted that the well-being approach majorly shapes the structure of this study report in presenting and discussing findings when bringing forth children's experiences. An additional approach, namely social justice sets out a broad context of progressive ideas. This theory is essential in evaluating whether children are being fairly treated by means of examining their access to well-being domains highlighted in sub-section 5.3.1 of this chapter.

The subsequent sub-sections clearly discuss the origin of each of the two theoretical approaches and a concise deliberation of the principles underlying each follows. A brief analysis of the context in which each of these two theories has been applied and assumptions of the theoretical approach as they relate to the study are brought to light. Most importantly, each theoretical approach is contextualised to the situation of children in northern Uganda beginning with the social justice approach.

## 5.2 The Social Justice Approach: Overview

In the 20th century, the social theory emerged as a separate discipline associated with objectivity, critical thinking and logic. The social theory was also equated with the need for knowledge through *a posteriori* methods of discovery, rather than *a priori* methods of tradition. Rawls' approach of social justice is one of many social theoretical approaches. Although there were other social justice theories before that of Rawls, his own was published in 1971 in his well-known book, *A theory of Justice* which is an important contribution in the area of social justice (Bojer, 2000:30; Rawls, 1971:1). His publication was meant to explain social justice more clearly as it followed on a number of doctrines that had dominated the philosophical tradition on justice (Bojer, 2000:23). Rawls (1971:3) introduced the main ideas of the justice theory drawing attention to issues of inequality and social conflict that exist in society. Rawls (1971:6) emphasises that the structure of society is the primary source of justice, that is to say, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights, and determine the division of advantages from social co-operation. He points to the key principles that are highlighted below.

Bojer (2000:32) observes that the first Rawls principle of social justice concerns equal rights to extensive liberty and is considered the most crucial. All people should have equal rights, and if that is not possible, those who were previously disadvantaged should receive priority. His argument is that we need to see society as a system of mutual co-operation over time. That is to say, all people, including children must follow the rules of society (Rawls, 2001:4). More so, given that children's rights are clearly stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the principle of liberty in social justice should also apply to them (Bojer, 2000:37). These children are not property of their parents. Instead, the government of Uganda represented by the Acholi sub-region leadership and social structures has a right to intervene in cases where parents/caretakers do not take steps to support their children.

The second principle of Rawls has two parts a) Rawls (1971:110) highlights the importance of fair equality of opportunity. According to him, a number of social scientists agree that a few people, have had and continue to have, far better access to meager resources at the expense of others. b) Rawls brings forth the difference principle[20] also known as the maximum principle that refers to fairness, equality, societal cooperation and accurate sharing of benefits in society (Bojer, 2000:32; Rawls, 1971:12). Rawls therefore condemns social inequality. This principle is concerned with benefiting the least disadvantaged group. This relates inter alia to children and more so those with physically disabilities that are at the same time trapped into hazardous child labour; those targeted by this study. Moreover, not all children are equal. Some children are underprivileged and must be uplifted. Rawls asserts that the driving force in bringing social change in any society is shifting towards a society where all people, not only have an idea of justice but agree to the terms of social justice. This means that all societal members, including parents/caretakers and the children with physical disabilities involved in harzadeous labour need to understand and agree to work towards social justice for their own benefit.

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[20] See https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rawls/?mc_cid=795d9a7f9b&mc_eid=[UNIQID]#LifWoraccessed 2 June, 2019

Rawls argues that there is a need to abolish structures and laws at institutional level that proves to be unfair even when they have been well-organised and are effective. Individuals need to exercise justice for societal well-being. Indeed, an injustice may only be tolerable if it is relatively essential to avoid added injustice. Freedom and equal citizenship irrespective of class, age and culture are emphasised (Rawls, 1971:220; Field, 2009:33). In principle, any given society must always have a set of obligatory laws concerning social justice for children. A society should be coordinated by communal understanding of social justice as it relates to children besides being disciplined to advance their well-being. Individual plans also require prioritising societal plans. Indeed, there is need for effective coordination, and working together efficiently; a key strategy for promoting social justice (Rawls, 1967:5).

After Rawls, a number of other scholars such as Robert Nozick (1974), Amartya Sen (1993), and Nancy Fraser (1997, 1998, and 2007) have written about social justice. It is interesting to note that except for Amartya Sen, other scholars rarely mention children (Bojer, 2000:23). One has to wonder why the writings of Nozick deals extensively with the rights of livestock while Barry (1996) attempts to write only to contextualise justice to children between generations rather than justice to children as children (Bojer, 2000:24).

Furthermore, despite other scholars pointing to social justice, this study considers theories put forward both by Rawls (1971) and Fraser (1997, 1998, and 2007) with regard to the most common factors. Rawls is described as an American political philosopher in the liberal tradition. He was born in Maryland where his father was a prominent lawyer and his mother was a Chapter President of the League of Women Voters (Wener, 2008). Rawls lived a scholarly adult life. He wrote extensively on religion and spoke out energetically against America's military actions in Vietnam. Throughout his work, he continued to write and depict justice as fairness restating the theory in Political Liberalism (1993), The Law of Peoples (1999), and Justice as Fairness (2001). It is against this background that Rawls' theory of social justice is considered very essential to inform this study.

On the other hand, Fraser is an American critical theorist and feminist born in 1947. She is currently the President of the American Philosophical Association. Fraser has written comprehensively connecting different development aspects such as social and political issues. Fraser is a specialist pronounced on justice and gender issues. Similar to Rawls, Fraser presents

social justice in terms of redistribution and recognition that are pre-requisites in the world today (Fraser, 2008:100). Fraser later added a third dimension of representation. On the whole, the three-dimensional view of social justice is referred to as a theory of post-Westphalian democratic justice (Fraser, 2008:281).

Fraser articulates a slogan of "No redistribution or recognition without representation" hence the three aspects are central in achieving participatory parity and are integrated with not any being satisfactory alone (Fraser, 2008:282). This study capitalises on Fraser's views above because sometimes the African society tends to practice partiality due to its patriarchal nature stemming from cultural beliefs and practices (Fraser, 2008:2). These cultural beliefs relate mainly to gender and disability and seem to determine the way girls with disabilities get trapped in hazardous child labour. Culture may also be responsible for the nature of work they are involved in as compared to their male counterparts. The study also explores the voices of these girls and boys even though they may not even be empowered enough to cry out for social justice loudly enough so that their voices are heard. Whether society is able to recognise their inner cries for social justice and come to their rescue remains a pertinent question interrogated in this study.

Thus, despite a difference in the vocabulary employed by Fraser and Rawls, they both add up pointing to social justice as very significant. In summary, the essential questions such as social relations and human nature, the access to opportunities, allocation of resources, redistribution, recognition and the decision-making process are some of the critical aspects put forward by these social justice scholars and are pertinent in this study with children with physical disabilities in harzadeous labour. Fraser enriches it when she adds the gender aspect that is very vital in this study as girls are specifically rendered more vulnerable compared to their male counterparts. It is therefore against this background that the theoretical approach context is supplementary to the well-being approach in analysing the study findings.

### 5.2.1 Assumptions of the Social Justice Approach

Rawls and Fraser agree on the assumption of caring for just distribution between adults of different generations but not on distributive justice between adults and children (Bojer, 2000:31). This aspect is however included in the study and parents are asked how they have assumed responsibility for their vulnerable children.

The social justice approach seems to confirm that hereditary endowments shape people's life prospects, necessitating a social justice position. A portion of people becomes rich because they inherit, causing deep inequality resulting from the basic structures of society (Bojer, 2000:31). This assumption helps the researcher to build a case based on experience in the field of the experiences of marginalised children where profound inequality added to their vulnerability. Children are exploited by their informal employers that already have resources. People are also born with talents but they do not always have the opportunities to realise these as a result of the existing structural inequalities in the world.

Furthermore, the social justice theory presents a libertarian position, namely that children have the right to pursue their own life and retain the fruits of their labour (Bojer, 200:29). It is therefore a useful approach to examine people's lives in settings where children can be trapped in hazardous child labour and experience resultant vulnerabilities. Acholi sub-region communities are traditional in nature with a sense of social cohesion. Children cannot live in isolation without their families and individual liberty is not adhered to in this society. Moreover, the rights of children are more of a conceptualisation of a Western model of childhood, as opposed to the reality in Africa (Dalyot and Dalyot, 2017:187).

In addition, the provision of infrastructure is supposed to create conditions for parents to earn an income; and therefore to be able to send their children to school and provide the basic needs. However, the absence of infrastructure at community level may lead to a failure to provide and therefore social justice becomes very difficult to achieve. However, for the people of northern Uganda, the war also blocked opportunities such as the continuation of business, and therefore constrained their ability to earn and send children to school. When conditions and rules are created for people, they can adjust and promote social justice. However, the rules for social justice may at times be ignored and viewed as constraining to people amid the social and economic impacts of the war. Therefore, it is quite possible for context and political economy issues to constrain the

applicability of the theory of social justice. Thus, meaningful intervention is required to better the lives of children in such a situation.

### 5.2.2 Limitations/Critiques of the Social Justice Theoretical Approach

Rawls' theory of social justice reflects that sometimes people in society are self-centered and individualistic, which can be a major hindrance in social justice efforts (Rawls, 1999:266-267).

Furthermore, given the many cultural beliefs surrounding disability, the cultural context of Uganda contributes to disempowering children with disabilities. Societal thinking about children with disabilities and the perception of them as a curse and misfortune determine how they are treated. It is challenging to realise social justice when culture has so many negative connotations. More detailed information about this aspect can be found in Chapter Four, subsection 4.2.3 where various models or ways of thinking about disability are discussed. It is worth noting that society needs to do away with the aspects of our culture that are life constraining and prioritise only those that are life giving and contribute to children's empowerment

As part of the theoretical contribution, in order to address the gaps in the social justice approach, this study sets up a set of criteria for analysing the findings. The criteria involves the following key aspects:

- Whether social justice principles are present in any policy frameworks in Uganda
- Communal understanding of social justice
- Community awareness of obligatory laws concerning children, including policies and guidelines on:
    o Children with physical disabilities
    o Hazardous child labour
    o Gender
- The presence of local committees/coordination mechanisms on social justice concerning children
- Whether information is provided to children with physical disabilities and their families on rights and resources and whether they are helped to access resources in their local community

- The presence of solidarity groups among parents/caretakers/local leaders aimed at promoting social justice for children

- Whether there are actions that demonstrate responsibility for addressing social justice for children with physical disabilities and those in informal employment in post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda at personal, group and community level

- The form of payment for children with disabilities in harzadeous labour (cash/in-kind payment) and how children benefit from it:
  - Who influences the disabled working children into harzadeous labour?
  - Equal voice by the children with physical disabilities and their representation in decision-making and, lastly;
  - Social injustices faced by girl children that are physically disabled and in harzadeous labour.

The end of this sub-section leads us into discussing the well-being theory.

## 5.3 Well-being Theoretical Approach: Context

Well-being[21] is a fundamental element of development linked with nurturing a good environment for children to enjoy widespread health, as well as valued and creative lives (Bohl et al., 2018:3). Development institutions define well-being differently and this determines the variables that form a basis for data collection (Dalyot and Dalyot, 2017:186). This study focuses on the variables that are deemed essential for the already marginalised child participants of post-war northern Uganda. It is more concerned with the well-being of the disabled child that is already trapped in hazardous child labour with particular attention to the fact that girls seem to be especially vulnerable to these circumstances.

McGregor (2007), maintains that the well-being theory was developed by The Well-being in Developing Countries (WeD) research Group at the University of Bath; aimed at understanding persistent poverty by examining objective circumstances and subjective experiences of people as well as influential societal structures. The well-being approach is based on the interaction between a) the resources that a person is able to command; b) the needs and goals they are able to fulfil utilising those resources; and c) the meaning they give to the goals they achieve and the processes

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[21] One of the key concepts used to explain what development really means in society

in which they engage results into well-being (Pauw and Gilmore: 2011). Interestingly, as observed by McGregor (2007), society and social collectivity shape the above three research categories and produce well-being outcomes, well-being processes and well-being structures. Bohl et al., (2018: 4) have a slightly different and clearer categorisation of child well-being as children's emotional and social wellbeing as well as their ability to cope in a changing environment. This conceptualisation seems appropriate for post-war context in which this study is situated. Therefore, the study borrows ideas from these two scholars as both advance valid arguments.

McGregor, (2007) also notes that the well-being approach has its roots in the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen (1999). Well-being has been central to capability assessments from the onset, and scholars like McGregor developed the core ideas of the well-being approach from Sen's work (Dalyot and Dalyot, 2018:194; Gough and McGregor, 2007). Furthermore, Gough and McGregor, (2007) observe that when the well-being approach is applied in research it seeks to answer four questions. These are contextualised in this study when analysing the findings. For instance: Are children's needs being met? Are children able to enjoy good and meaningful relationships in society? Are children able to act meaningfully in accordance with their goals and beliefs, if any? and Are children satisfied with their quality of life? The analysis informs policy recommendations for the plight of children with physical disabilities trapped in hazardous labour and more so the vulnerable girl child.

It is important to note that well-being outcomes depend on the resources that children and their families have at their disposal. In this case, particular note must be taken of those resources lost during the two decade long armed conflict. It may also extend to mean the needs of children that are either met or denied and to asses as a whole whether the quality of life is achieved. It should be noted that well-being processes and structures may have an upper hand in influencing the well-being outcomes and the reverse may well be true. Well-being processes include inventing aspirations and putting strategies in place to achieve them within the existing societal structures (McGregor 2007:26).

**5.3.1 Well-Being of Children in War-Affected Communities of Acholi Sub-Region**

The well-being of a child is viewed holistically in terms of domains such as food and nutrition access, health, economic well-being, presence of a supportive family and community, spirituality, access to shelter and good protection (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:1). Child rights violations continued after the northern Uganda armed conflict and received less regional attention (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:71). Circumstances of this nature seem to compromise the well-being of children such as those targeted by this study. In northern Uganda, war deprived families by forcing them into poverty. This resulted because many families and their children were moved into Internally People's Displaced Camps and protected villages where they could not continue with their previous economic activities (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2012:69). Field, (2009:33) Concurs by anrguing that poverty is rampant during and after armed conflict. Details on this are highlighted in sub-section 2.5 of Chapter Two. This might have created circumstances for parents to send their boy and girl children into labour to contribute to putting a meal on table. Similarly, war may be associated with depression and depressed parents may often not want to work. This could have reduced the financial security of families.

Furthermore, when gender relations at household level are unstable, as was the case during the armed conflict and possibly is the case in households today, the well-being of children is likely to be compromised in many ways. Parents and caretakers are most likely to end up in a high level of poverty. Others are most likely to separate or even divorce and children suffer the consequences. In this case, either parent may be responsible for the upbringing of children yet single parenthood comes with multiple challenges such as failure to provide for the needs of the children due to limited income. In worst circumstances children are absorbed in extended families as is common in a traditional African setting. This scenario is worse when children are orphaned as it adds to their vulnerability, and even more so for the girl child. In all circumstances, the respective parents or guardians are most likely going to send their children to work to earn an income for the family. Such children may even include those with physical disabilities with resultant increased vulnerability. For instance, some of them may end up with multiple or complex disabilities.

### 5.3.2 Assumptions of the Well-being Approach

The well-being theory was developed on a number of assumptions as suggested by McGregor (2007). For instance, that people have preferences: bargaining occurs within and between individuals, communities, and that institutions construct adaptive and innovative preferences. This relates to this study in that it is most likely that working children with physical disabilities may have had choices to make if their families and communities gave them room to be innovative, rather than subjecting them to hazardous child labour to earn a living. This factor is explored using the well-being tool employed on the study participants and in their narratives.

The well-being theory also assumes that well-being is a state and a dynamic process. This assumption relates to this study in that there is room to improve the status of the well-being of the primary study participants through various strategies as per the findings and recommendations. Their situation is not static in nature but circumstances may change to better their lives.

### 5.3.4 Limitations of the Well-being theory

The well-being theory is noted to have the limitation of being a generalised concept that is broadly defined. However, the definition as applied in this study is simplified. For instance, particular contexts of well-being are selected specifically relating to eight (8) key domains outlined in the introductory subsection 5.1 of this very chapter. There is therefore no doubt that without the social justice principles forming a basis for discussing and applying the well-being approach, the rights of children are compromised. Hence Chapter Seven and Eight will explore whether children had equal human rights opportunities and whether their well-being was influenced in relation to health, food, community relationships among other key domains using the set criteria detailed in sub-section 5.2.3 of this chapter. Where critical gaps exist, the recommendations are made accordingly in Chapter Nine.

## 5.4 Chapter Conclusion

All in all, the social justice theoretical approach highlights the justice principles for the basic structure of society, including social redistribution, equal rights and the market being subjected to the social responsibility of the state, in this case the well-being of children. People decide what is just or unfair. Deep-rooted social cultural practices and the growing wealth inequality are characteristics of many societies and show the need for fairness in all manner for the plight of the already vulnerable children. The well-being theoretical approach illustrates how people become and remain poor. It examines the idea of human functioning, capabilities and needs, analysis of livelihoods and resources as well as subjective well-being and objective well-being. The social justice theoretical approach is additionally employed to set out a broad context of progressive ideas. The well-being theoretical approach is primary utilised in the analysis of the study findings. If used together with the social justice approach, better results can be expected. Children may not achieve holistic well-being without the application of social justice principles. It is against this background that this study employs these two theoretical approaches.
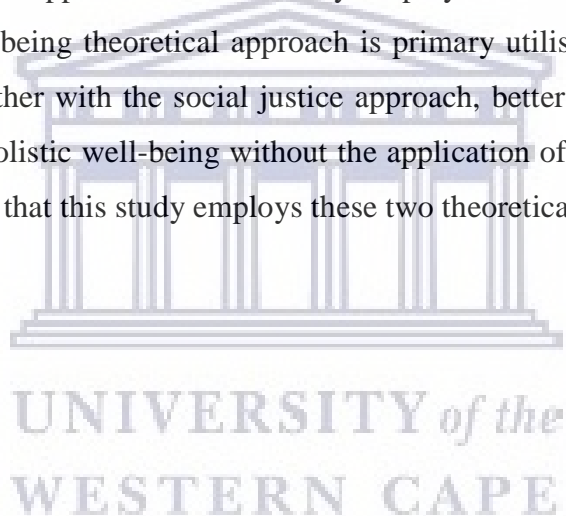
## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 6.1 Chapter Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter One, this study examines the synergy between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability and how the interconnectedness of these three factors impact on the well-being of children in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. It is also in chapter one that the researcher briefly mentions who she is and what has motivated her to do this study. The study involved five objectives that are clearly indicated in Chapter One under the research design sub-section. To obtain a clear understanding of the issues, children with disabilities were interviewed as primary study participants and their parents/caretakers were key informants.

In this chapter, the researcher outlines the various scientific methods and techniques applied to arrive at empirical findings. The steps adopted in this regard are consistently indicated in this research and the logic behind each of them is demonstrated. Methods and techniques relevant to the study are as advised by Kothari, (1999:10). The research design is well described, and includes the area of study, study population, sampling strategy in the natural setting, research instruments, research procedure, data management, ethical considerations, as well as the anticipated limitations to the study. In addition, the researcher presents the instruments used, how they were employed, and how the data were managed and analysed. First, attention is devoted to the research design.

### 6.2 Research Design

This study is premised on the social justice and well-being frameworks with a qualitative methodology used to test the findings. Knowledge is constructed based on participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2014:323; Kothari, 2004:31). A qualitative research design is therefore seen as the best approach chosen for this study given its descriptive and exploratory nature that makes it most appropriate in exploring the lived experiences of children (Creswell, 2014:31; Pillay, 2014:198). As described by Morse and Richards (2002), qualitative research attempts to make

sense of our environment. In the case of this study, the qualitative design was used to find out participants' opinions, lived experiences, perceptions, feelings, values, attitudes, and understanding concerning the themes of gender relations, child labour and disability in a pre- and post-war environment. According to Tuli (2010), the qualitative research methodology treats people as research participants. This emphasis can be an empowering process for participants in a qualitative study, as the participants are being seen as the writers of their own history, rather than objects of research (Morse & Richards, 2002; Williams, 2003; Carter & Little, 2007; Yin, 2009; Gerring, 2011; Creswell, 2013). This methodological approach enabled participants in this study to make meaning of their own realities, as they came to appreciate their own construction of knowledge.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) advise that a qualitative approach allows deep understanding of the participants' own lived experiences. As articulated by Braud and Anderson (1998), that human experience is vital in conducting research. It was essential to know how children with physical disabilities in hazardous labour define and explain their situations. This method provided an opportunity for children with physical disabilities and involved in hazardous labour as well as the key informants (parents/caretakers) to express their opinions, emotions, feelings and perceptions. This process has been seen as enabling and empowering the participants, allowing them to freely express their views, which they may not have had a chance to do so if they were outside of their own social system (Cohen et al., 2007). Creswell (2013) argues that qualitative research is legitimate in its own right. This approach, according to Rapley (2011), increases knowability, since it does not impose a priori theoretical positions on data, but remains open to knowledge generation and synthesis. According to Kvale (1996), qualitative research design is not static, but open-ended, in the sense that it is attuned to the nature of the concepts being investigated and the behavior of the participants. Thyer (2001) concurs by arguing that the method and procedure for investigation unfolds as one gets to the specific stages of the research.

Furthermore, Creswell (2014:234) notes that contextualisation is key in social science studies. This study is highly contextual as data were collected from 'real-life' settings in the Gulu and Nwoya districts of the post-war Acholi sub-region. The qualitative method was essential in achieving all five study objectives in post-war Acholi sub-region, namely a) exploring the nature of gender relations in households of working children with physical disabilities; b) establishing how hazardous child labour relates to disability in post -war Acholi sub-region; c) exploring the

impact of the existing social justice system on hazardous child labour; d) examining the well-being of children in hazardous labour with physical disabilities; and e) exploring the perceived links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war Acholi.

Additionally, a number of scholars believe that a different dimension of understanding can be gained through gathering data from key stakeholders such as parents and caretakers (Ward and Webster 2018: 375; Knott and Taylor, 2014: 412). Parents and caretakers were key informants in this study and shared their experiences relating to three levels, namely before the war, during the war and in the post-war period. The researcher systematically gathered, analysed and presents life experiences from stories of children and key informants that were collected through the FG interviews as well as field notes. These were used as narrative units of analysis in this research to understand the way children, their families and communities understand gender relations at household level, as well as hazardous child labour and disability in the Acholi post-war context.

While there are many qualitative research designs associated with qualitative research, for this study, the researcher preferred to use ethnographic paradigm as the most suitable, effective and appropriate process. This aided in describing and understanding gender relations, child labour and disability from the participant's perspective. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize the importance of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in qualitative studies such as this. This ethnographic strategy helped the researcher to immerse thoroughly through the lives of her participants while using in-depth interviews and focus group interviews to gain access, clarity, knowledge and distinct information during the study (Ajimabo, 2015). The researcher was cognizant of her role and ensured that she was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, an observer, a full participant, an interviewer and an investigator. She was aware of her own assumptions and biases on gender relations, child labour and disability. She created an understanding among study participants while encouraging respect and tolerance. The researcher made an effort to know each participant of the team in all focus groups and treated everyone the same. Together with participants, the researcher ensured they agreed on modalities that were followed during the interview. All these aspects made the research process smooth and especially deepened discussion, thus enriching the study information.

**6.3 Area of Study**

Uganda is composed of thirteen recognised administrative sub-regions (UBOS, 2014) as reflected in Figure one (1). This study was carried out in the Acholi sub-region also known as Acholi land. This region was the epicentre of the almost 20 years LRA war in the late 1980s, 1990s, and the early 2000s, as was discussed in Chapter Two. At the time of this research, the region was composed of eight districts. In Uganda new districts are created on a whim for reasons best known to top leadership. Therefore, it may not be surprising if there are more districts in the region by the time this study gets to be published. The current districts include Gulu, Nwoya, Amuru, Agago, Kitgum, Lamwor, Pader and Omoro. The latter is near the Uganda-Sudan border. It should be noted that, at the onset of the insurgency, the sub-region was composed of the Gulu and Kitgum districts only. The two were sub-divided by the government of Uganda into the current districts in the sub-region for easy administration. Today, Acholi sub-region has ten (10) counties, seventy eight (78) sub counties, three hundred and seventy (370) parishes and three thousand and fourteen (3,014) villages. Out of the eight districts, in the Acholi sub-region, two were purposively selected for this study, namely Gulu district (urban) and Nwoya district (rural) for various reasons related to the study themes. These areas seem to have more disabled children as compared to others in the region. There also seem to be more gender relational issues as opposed to other areas. The two selected areas of study were also the epicentre for the insurgency. Gulu district had a municipality and was purposively selected for this study. During this year (2020), it attained city status.  Layibi sub-county is located in the city and that houses the industrial area where a lot of petty trading takes place. Laroo sub-county is famous for stone quarrying and sand mining. Both were purposively selected. It should be noted that Gulu district has 10 sub-counties, 41 parishes and 144 villages.

Furthermore, Nwoya district was also purposively selected because it has a lot of farming activities with a number of agricultural farms owned by foreigners who employ local people, including children (UBOS, 2014). Anaka sub-county of Nwoya was purposively selected because it also had the infamous Internally Displaced People's Camp (IDP), namely Anaka. With many families around the camps, fertility rates were also high because couples may not have had work to do after being deprived of their economic activities. They spent a lot of time with each other and had more children. Therefore, children were in very large numbers around the camp throughout the insurgency period. This also contributed to Uganda's high population that is

composed of mainly children up to today as compared to adults (UBOS, 2014). Nwoya district was formally part of Gulu district and only became autonomous recently, especially after the war. In addition, the selected study areas have higher numbers of working children as well as children with disabilities compared to other places within each of the districts (UBOS, 2014). Nwoya district is composed of 4 sub-counties, 26 parishes and 188 villages. Anaka sub-county has 6 parishes, 53 villages. Kuluamuka Parish was purposively sampled because it is also just close to the former Anaka IDP Camp with a number of agricultural farms. Two of the surrounding villages, namely Amuka and Kweyo were purposively sampled given its shared characteristics with Atiak (UBOS, 2014). Parishes (not related to religion, but rather a name for a particular demarcation) and villages in each of the selected sub-counties were purposively selected. Notably, this study focused on both urban and rural population given that all areas were affected by the insurgency. Both urban and rural areas are targeted for comparison of the study findings.

## 6.4 Language and Economic activities

The people in the Acholi sub-region speak an Acholi dialect which is a western Nilotic language also known as Luo. Before the war, the people of northern Uganda largely depended on cattle. With the loss of cattle due to the war, people have turned to land and trade. The people grow a variety of food and cash crops. Over 90% of the farmers are engaged in crop production as their major activity and a small percentage practice livestock rearing, bee keeping and fish farming on small family holdings using family labour and rudimentary hand tools. Most people engage in the growing of staple food and cash crops such as sorghum, finger millet, sim-sim, upland rice, green vegetables, fruit trees, beans, groundnuts, sorghum, maize, millet cassava, sweet potatoes, pigeon peas, sunflower, cotton, and tobacco (Annan, 2010). In each of the target districts some form of agricultural processing with industries mainly for milling of grains (maize, sorghum, millet, rice) and cassava is found. The war resulted in extreme hunger, displacement (such as in camps), destruction of public infrastructure, unhygienic conditions, health and education gaps, lack of access to basic services, economic and political deterioration as well as poor nutrition. The effects of the war are still felt by children and the entire population to the present day (Terres des Hommes, 2016; Roggero et al, 2007). More details about this are highlighted in Chapter Three.

### 6.5 Literacy levels

The selected study districts have somewhat high illiteracy levels (UBOS, 2014). Many children could not go to school during the insurgency. Instead, they were abducted from their homes and taken to serve as porters, sex slaves, baby-sitters and fighters. The vicious circle has continued to manifest in many of their families till today.

### 6.6 Study Population

Uganda's population at the time of the study based on the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics and the 2014 National Population Census is approximately 36 million people. Children below 18 years constitute fifty five per cent (55%) of the total population (UBOS, 2018). Approximately, 2.5 million children live with some form of disability in Uganda (UBOS, 2017). This study was conducted in the Acholi sub-region. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics Population Census report (2014) has no mention of the actual number of people in the entire Acholi sub-region. However, Gulu district alone had a population of about four hundred and thirty-six thousand and three hundred and forty-five (436, 345) people in 2013, according to the latest available statistics (Gulu District Local Government, 2013). However, by October 2020, the total population would be much higher. Nwoya had a population of one hundred and thirty-three thousand five hundred and six (133,506) people in 2014 (UBOS, 2014). Researchers believe that in any qualitative studies, data are best collected at the field site where participants are experiencing a phenomenon (Ward and Webster, 2018: 375; Creswell, 2014:304). This study was conducted in the Gulu and Nwoya districts of the Acholi sub-region in places where children with physical disabilities experience hazardous labour.

The primary target participants for this study were girls and boys aged 10 - 17 years with physical disabilities and engaged in hazardous labour. At this age, children are in the World Bank's specified average age bracket of hazardous child labour of 5-17 years (World Bank, 2018). In particular, hazardous child labour is used to refer to agricultural hazardous child labour, children working in stone quarries, sand mining, brick laying and petty trade in the Gulu and Nwoya districts. The choice of this type of employment is based on fact findings highlighted in Table 1, Chapter One. Children are working for pay either in cash or in- kind with an aim of meeting their basic needs and the needs of their families. Some in-kind payments are in the form of food items such as sugar or silver fish, or in the form of paying for their medical bills among

others. A discussion of these is detailed in Chapter Eight. Children are denied the right to education and work for pay either during the day time or evening hours. The second study population is composed of a parent (father/mother) or caretaker of each of the selected children that were involved in the study. All study participants were purposively selected.

It should be noted that the study employed a qualitative approach in order to understand and inquire into unique lived experiences of children in social interaction within the post-war environment (Polit & Beck, 2004; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Researchers believe that human beings are naturally story-telling beings both collectively and individually (Thomas, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). Study participants described and reflected on their experience through social interaction during focus group interviews. This was one way of conducting research together with children. Their experiences could not have been understood without listening to them describing their stories after thorough reflection (Ward and Webster 2018:375; Glynne-Glynne, 2010:405). The researcher ensured that study participants reflected, analysed and consciously shared their entire personal experiences as suggested by Ward and Webster (2018:375) and Moustakas (1994:29). The primary study participants also gave the breadth and depth of their experiences of with physical disabilities while narrating how each acquired their disability. They also narrated their understanding and experience of working to earn for self and family, including issues of payment and utilisation of the resources earned. These aspects brought to light the wholeness and meaning of their lived experiences.

**6.7 Sampling strategy**

This study employed purposive sampling that is also known as non-probability, deliberate, selective, subjective and judgment sampling (Creswell, 2014:239). The motivation to use this approach came about as the children who were to be interviewed have undergone the experience of working in hazardous labour and at the same time had physical disabilities. It also required having participants with technical information regarding the war. These participants are the parents/caretakers that lived before the war, and experienced the war directly. Given this type of sampling, participants were deliberately selected by the researcher (Kothari, 2004:73). The sample is representative given the theoretical saturation principle employed in this study highlighted in sub-section 6.7.1 of this chapter. Participants were interviewed until information

was exhausted. Creswell, (2014:239) agrees that the principle of saturation is very important. The last two groups of each category of participants were interviewed after identifying some gaps during data analysis to bridge the gap in the stories and this marked the end of the in-depth focus group interviews. More study groups of participants would have been recruited and interviewed in case information was insufficient to answer the research questions.

The selected study participants were in an advantageous and better position to provide the information required (Sekaran, 2003:277). This type of sampling was essential in concentrating on children and key informants with the required study characteristics to provide relevant information needed to fulfil the study objectives (Gaganpreet, 2017; Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). In this case, the researcher considered a homogeneous sample, namely children of a similar age group (10-17 years) as primary study participants. In each of the two districts of Nwoya and Gulu, there were eight (8) groups of children interviewed. Each group was composed of five (5) children that were purposively selected as the representative sample. This made a total of sixteen (16) groups of children that participated in the study.

Given the high vulnerability of girls, each group consisted of two boys and three girls. The ability to read and write was also part of the selection criteria for these primary participants. For each group of participants, one story was generated, making a total of sixteen children's stories for analysis. Parents and caretakers of the children formed their respective small groups accordingly for the focus group interviews. These parents/caretakers lived before the war period, experienced the war and are now in the post-war era still performing their roles and responsibilities in society. Given their experience, theirs was a category that was very suitable for the study. Like the children's groups, in each study district, four groups of parents and caretakers were formed. There were sixteen (16) groups of parents/caretakers interviewed across the two districts.

In total, there were thirty two (32) interviews conducted across the two districts (inclusive of groups of primary study participants and key informants). The sex of participants was considered in selecting children to ensure a fair representation while parents/caretakers of the interviewed children automatically qualified irrespective of sex. It should be noted that out of the eighty (80) children interviewed, eight (8) of them were then purposively selected and interviewed individually regarding their well-being (Once again girls were given priority given the vulnerability that prevails).

In order to make sure privacy was maintained during focus group interviews, the researcher ensured that information was specifically collected on key issues related to the well-being of children and not any violence they have experienced. The questions were generic and not personal. Participants were told what type of questions and topics were to be discussed. Berman et al. (2016:47) concur that privacy must be maintained when conducting research on and with children.

Berman et al. (2016:47) argues that confidentially identified data must protected. It should also be stored and transmitted safely and if need be, it could be destroyed. For the case of this study, data was stored and locked up in a safe place only accessible by the researcher. Interviews were conducted in a safe and quiet places. Children were assured of anonymity and it was strictly observed. The consideration of these aspects provided a safe environment for children to freely share in their larger groups during the focus group interviews.

### 6.7.1 Purposive sampling technique

A number of authors affirm that purposeful sampling places primary emphasis on theoretical saturation in order to understand the details by continuing to interview until no new information is forthcoming (Gaganpreet, 2017; Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016; Tongco (n.d)). This approach was employed to ensure an intensive study of the selected child participants and their parents/caretakers. Purposive sampling was used to select the two study districts, sub-counties, parishes and villages because these were epicentres of the insurgency compared to all other districts located in the same sub-region that have agencies for hazardous child labour. The districts have similar characteristics in terms of the way the conflict affected them. A purposive sampling technique was essential in helping the researcher to reach the homogeneous samples quickly since it is a faster form of data collection. Overall, the purposive sampling technique helped in attaining information on each of the study objectives in a cost-effective way.

Although the researcher was subjective in choosing the study sample, it did not affect the study findings because the selection was limited to only those who met the inclusion criteria. Children with physical disabilities (the introductory section of Chapter Seven highlights these categories) and in hazardous labour were reached as the primary study participants at their site of work while parents and caretakers of these very children automatically qualified for inclusion in the study and were invited at convenient venues for the interview.

In summary, all study participants contributed to building one story that was generated using each of the study objectives as a guideline. Each of the children in the eight groups shared their experience on gender relation, hazardous child labour, and disability. Eight (8) children out of the total number were interviewed individually on their well-being using key domains adopted from Senefeld et al., (2009) and Senefeld et al., (2011). The tool was already piloted in a post-war context. This came to light after a literature review search was undertaken to identify the key domains that contribute to the overall well-being of children.  A detailed discussion about the tool is found in sub-section 6.9.3 of this very chapter.

In summary, sixteen (16) focus group interviews (FGIs) were conducted with children and another sixteen (16) with parents/caretakers. Each of the FGIs comprised of five (5) participants. Eight (8) individual interviews conducted were with children regarding their well-being. In addition, ten (10) children in equal numbers from each of the two districts participated in the 'draw and write technique' to further trace their lived experiences. This served as an additional way to reflect research with children as they discovered themselves during the exercise. Notably, these children were also part of the focus group interviews. There were one hundred sixty (160) study participants in total combining the numbers of primary study participants and key informants.

The study findings are transferable to the Ugandan situation in a post-war context, although to some extent some unique situations may be identified in other locations of Uganda because of differences in environment.

## 6.8 Data Collection Methods

Various data collection methods were employed in this study. According to O'Reilly (2009), a family of methods is ideal for triangulation of data. Therefore, the study utilised data collection methods, namely in-depth interviews, draw and write, participant observation, tape recording and note taking. All interviews were conducted in quiet places where hazardous child labour was experienced. The researcher worked with one research assistant that was a native of the study area. The researcher has over fifteen (15) years of experience of working with children and conducting stakeholder Disability Equality Training (DET) as per the ILO

standards. Interviews with key informants were mainly conducted by researchers individually. The female research assistant in Nwoya and the male counterpart in Gulu were individuals with physical impairment. This seems to have partly motivated child participants with physical disabilities to open up. It also aligned well with the general slogan of people with disabilities namely, *"Nothing about Us, without Us"*. Data were collected from sixteen (16) groups of primary participants across the study area. The study participants, including children, were encouraged to lead the conversation and to discuss relevant information to understand their lived experiences as girls and boys with physical disabilities and involved in hazardous labour. Discussions were guided by the respective study tools that were designed in reference to the study objectives.

Prior to the interviews with each group of child participants, a brief confidence and team-building exercise was undertaken in the form of a short story. For instance, the stories were in recognition of their effort and work reflecting how good and caring children are in trying to fend for their families and in search for a better future. This created a free environment for the interview sharing among participants to bridge the likely gap and build trust. The activity lasted a maximum of 15 minutes and applied to only child participants in their respective groups. The exercises differed to suit each group according to its particular situation.

The stories of children and caretakers relate to gender relations as it happens at household level and contribute to circumstances that influence children with physical disabilities in hazardous labour. Children also narrate how cultural factors were a push into hazardous child labour and how they are exploited through the various forms of payment. More still, children narrate some of the injustices experienced in their lives given their disability status and hazardous labour process. The stories also reveal a picture on the interconnectedness of the three study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in the Acholi post-war context. In total, the 32 groups of study participants contributed information that made up the relevant stories. The voices of the study participants are quoted verbatim in the different sub-sections of Chapters Seven and Eight. The analysis and discussion of these study findings are discussed in Chapter Seven and Eight.

This study observes the qualitative research recommendation of targeting a moderate number of participants (Creswell, 2014: 239; Cohen et.al. 2007:461). Individual children and small groups of children and parents/caretakers were interviewed in order to ensure an in-depth nature of this study. This is advantageous as compared to big numbers of study participants that are unsuitable and have high expenditure in terms of time and resources. With high numbers, the in-depth nature of the study would get totally lost (Cohen et.al. 2007:462). It is for this reason that the current study involved a small sample of participants with only sixteen (16) stories recorded and analysed to inform the findings (Wilkinson, 2002:98; Sekaran, 2003:269). Participants were given space to voice their concerns and lived life experience in the post-war context thus fulfilling the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) slogan, "Nothing about Us without Us".

### 6.8.1 Focus Group Interviews (FGI)

The study employed the use of focus groups interviews on child participants and parents/caretakers as an opportunity to interact face-to-face with them. In order to uncover the story behind children's experiences and parents/caretakers as some of the key informants, focus group interviews were the primary data collection method that were supplemented with audio tape recording, note taking, observation and draw and write exercises. A focus group interview has multiple advantages, such as providing valuable qualitative information in a short period of time and providing reasonably dependable data that could be obtained at a low cost (Sekaran, 2003:220; Welman & Kruger, 2004:188). This method is also considered by Sarantakos (2005) as the best to allow participants and the researcher to probe each other's reasons for having a particular view. It was extremely important to hear the voices and views of working children with disabilities as well as their parents/caretakers in regard to the study themes. It also encouraged a real spontaneous form of expression and generation of information based on lived experiences. The researcher encouraged everyone to speak up, used a respectful tone and managed the pace during the discussion. The facilitation helped study participants to be aware that the facilitator moderates the discussion to avail chances to all team members to give their views. The facilitator remained neutral and encouraged participants who seemed shy to speak, especially in focus group interviews groups 1 and 4 with children from Nwoya. In addition, the discussion was regulated and the facilitator was mindful of participants that tended to dominate the discussion, especially

in focus group interviews 2 with children from Gulu district. This gave other participants a chance to share their experience too. Participants' points were also summarised so they knew that the facilitator listened to them actively and probed accordingly. The facilitator controlled and encouraged each group member to share experiences while dealing with both categories of study participants. The discussion lasted for a maximum of 90 minutes, as was the case for the longest discussion in one of the groups of parents from Nwoya.

Group dynamics were observed during the interviews of both categories of study participants (children and parents/caretakers) that ensured that strong members did not set the tone but each had a voice to share their opinion. The views of each FGI were compiled, analysed and built into one coherent story on each of the research questions. Each story was analysed deeply. This method saved time compared to individual interviews where children took time reflecting on their experiences. In the focus group, participants quickly supplemented and/or subtracted from a particular view engaged in hazardous labour based on own experience. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. Handwritten notes were also taken to supplement the audio interviews. Photographs were taken for each representative team with written permission from each study participant. Refreshments were provided to the study participants.

### 6.8.2. In-depth interviews

Eight (8) individual interviews were conducted with children with reference to the domains outlined in the well-being tool adapted from Senefeld et al., (2009). The elements were modified into suitable open-ended interview questions for the study as suggested by Creswell (2014:242). The researcher wrote interview notes that were transcribed immediately. These interviews were aimed at examining the children's well-being as specified by objective four of the study.

### 6.8.3. Draw and Write technique

The draw and write technique was employed to achieve objective three and four with regard to social justice issues by examining the well-being of children trapped in hazardous child labour. This helped to arrive at the lived experiences of ten (10) selected child participants aged 10-17. It is important to remind ourselves that the children involved in this study are those trapped in hazardous child labour with physical disabilities. Each child participant received a piece of plain paper with colour crayons and a pen. Each had 30 minutes to reflect and illustrate their lived personal experiences. Each participant was asked to reflect on own life in terms of a symbol "The

River of My Life". A river is a very important symbol in the African society. It runs between banks and has tributaries with water falls, ups and downs (Hope and Timmel, 2002: 37). Everyone reflected on their individual life experience in terms of a river's journey and generated their life story in relation to the injustices/unfair ways that they have personally experienced. Each child demonstrated individually on a piece of paper using different colours of crayons provided. For instance, one child illustrated how the farm manager is very cruel as she supervises their work at the rice farm. The child added in writing that they work so hard and are paid very little money and at time they are not paid but exploited. Details of the child's illustration are presented in Chapter Eight. Different colours of their choice do not have any meaning but meaning is expressed by the picture illustrated and the wording indicated. Participants were encouraged to depict experiences that could have been family, community or even work related and/or related to hazardous child labour, their disability condition and gender relations at given moments in their life. The tributaries such as events, persons and what these caused in their life journey were indicated. Children were also encouraged to express times of joy, although very few displayed it in their drawing and writing. Each child participant supplemented their drawing with a summarised write-up of their story relating to the illustration. The next 25 minutes were utilised by having each child participant share their meaning of his/her illustration with the other four children in the group. Mainly negative experiences of individual life journey were depicted. Participants then had 5 minutes quiet time to reflect individually on the meaning of their shared experiences; how all the factors in their lives have interacted to bring each of them to the present day. They willingly and collectively shared that resulted in increased meaning/ understanding of their experience.

Notably, the draw and write technique partly aided motivation and confidence building before the focus group interviews (FGI), as reflected in the motivation for triangulation that is associated with multiple benefits. Although there are criticisms of focus group interviews, namely ethical issues such as it being easy to divert from confidentiality, as well as practical and research issues, it has remained a versatile instrument employed by researchers and practitioners in understanding children's views mainly regarding education, health education and well-being, especially in the United Kingdom (McWhirter, 2014:250). While the drawing element is critiqued for being used by some researchers for fun and to close the gap between the researcher and participants, it was employed in this study to make child participants as comfortable as possible

when delivering their experience. In particular, the approach is adopted from the works of Timmel and Hope (2002). After the draw and write exercise, child participants had a 30 minute break with refreshments before discussing other relevant study questions to achieve objective 1, 2, and 5.

It should be noted that a child counsellor was available as part of the team to handle any emotional issues that could arise. However, only one such case was registered in the Nwoya district. The child's illustration and sharing indicated that he accidentally hurt his leg as he was in a hurry trying to weed at the rice farm. The supervisor instructed him not to leave the garden despite the heavy rains. Unfortunately, he never got paid his three thousand Uganda shillings (less than one USD) for that day yet he also had no food at home. He burst into tears and the counsellors attended to him immediately. On a whole, the process revealed great lessons that require attention at family, community, and national levels. More details are presented in Chapter Seven and Eight. This approach is part of what the researcher would call 'placing children at the centre as their own change agents' by amplifying their voices. This form of experience seems to have enabled children to reflect on their own life experiences and how their important life journey is likely to continue in a more thoughtful way than its past and current form.

It should be noted that part of the selection criteria was the ability of each child to read and write. So, all selected children knew how to read and write. They ably expressed their experiences both in picture and in writing. However, a scribe was also with the research team on standby in case any child was unwilling or lacked confidence and needed support to write her story accurately. None of the child study participants requested this form of support. Children were encouraged to write in a language that they were most comfortable with (English or Luo). Interestingly, eight of them chose to write in English and only two wrote in the mother tongue 'Luo' and the stories were translated by the research assistants both of whom belong to and are fluent in the same language. No child was coerced to participate if they were unwilling. It is worth noting that there was no need for analysing children's drawings in detail except to observe the illustrations indicating physical disability (McWhirter, 2014: 251). The researcher gained deeper insight into lived experiences of the children, learnt more about their perspectives and made new discoveries in the study as their life stories unfolded. The draw and write exercise supplemented information from

the focus group interviews and the individual interviews supplemented from information regarding well-being.

This technique of draw and write was employed since one of its benefits is that of being participatory and child-centred (McWhirter, 2014:251). The researcher believes that this approach highly considers children as their own development agents and engages them in critical thinking, analysis and provides a greater understanding of their life journey, and it is regarded as an essential voice in community development. It also conscientised children and parents/caretakers to start questioning their real-life situation and effect change by seeking other opportunities to better their lives. This is affirmed when Freire (1994) advocates for a "pedagogy of the oppressed".

### 6.8.4 Observation

The study used an open-ended observation method throughout the data collection process in particular participant observation during interviews (Creswell, 2014:239). No specific data collection tool was utilised. However, this method enables the researcher to describe the existing situations by using the five senses. Creswell (2014:241) notes that this method aids the researcher to have first-hand experience with the participant while noticing unusual aspects and recording information as it occurs. The method was employed to collect data and compile a written description of children's and other key informants' actions and behaviour during the interviews. Participants' anonymity was considered essential, bearing in mind the covert observation aspect of not reporting information that was observed but seemed private to the study participant (Creswell, 2014:241).

### 6.8.5 Tape recording and Photographing

Audio recording was used to capture what was said during the interviews (Creswell, 2014:240; Bloor & Wood, 2006). This method enabled the researcher to bridge the gap that might have risen during note taking as a means of providing extra information. The researcher ensured that both tape-recording and field notes were transcribed as swiftly as possible. The time and concentration spent studying and analysing these materials was equivalent to that of the interviews. Lofland and Lofland (1984) stress the importance of investing ample time to minimise challenges during transcribing.

Visual materials such as photographs were taken with permission from the study participants (Creswell, 2014:240). The researcher ensured that this was not done often and if required, it was for a short period of time in order to avoid distracting participants (Creswell, 2014: 242). For confidentiality purposes, the faces of participants are covered up in each of the photographs that appear in this report.

## 6.9 Data Collection Instruments

From the data collection methods highlighted above, the following instruments were employed:

### 6.9.1 Focus Group Guide

The researcher generated two separate tools (one for children and another for parents/ caretakers) since that the former had questions specifically relating to their experiences during the post-war era while the one for parents/caretakers was focused on three periods, namely: a) before the armed conflict b) during armed conflict and c) the current post-war era. Every tool used contained nine (9) guiding open-ended questions that were kept simple and short with clear wording **(See Appendix B).** The researcher avoided questions on sensitive issues where participants would hesitate to provide a response. Three types of questions were considered, namely probing questions, follow-up questions and exit questions to ensure the researcher did not miss anything. The children's tool was employed on sixteen (16) groups across the study area and each was composed of 5 children (children with disabilities and in hazardous labour). Parents and guardians of these children were also interviewed in sixteen (16) different teams of five (5) individuals each.

The researcher studied the pattern and time best suitable for each category of participants (children and parents/caretakers) and the interviews were arranged accordingly. One month prior to the focus group activities, the researcher identified the villages where the children that work on the agricultural farms, sand mines and stone quarries come from. These were purposively selected to guide in recruiting participants involved in this study. The local council leaders around the sand and stone quarries and agricultural farms permitted the researcher to conduct the interviews following an introductory letter from Chief Administrative Officers of the respective districts.

The focus group interviews groups were formed after the arrival of the researcher. The interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes as time varied depending on the ability of the group to respond to discussion questions. Notably, across the study area, key informants were available for interviews in the afternoons when they did not have much to do. Children working on agricultural farms were available in the afternoons while those that worked on sand mines and stone quarries were accessed on any day of the week and interviews were held as and when appropriate in groups of five. The sex of all categories of participants was considered highly important during the selection process in order to strike a balance in representation. The guide collected information on all study objectives. Refreshments, including lunch were provided to individual children. A refund for refreshments and transport was made available to each of the parents/caretakers. The interviews lasted a period of one month across the study area.

## 6.9.2 The Well-being interview guide

An interview guide was employed to collect data on objective four (4) aimed at examining the well-being of children with physical disabilities trapped in hazardous child labour in the post war-affected Acholi sub-region. It was applied to eight (8) individual children **(See Appendix C).** The interviews lasted between 40-45 minutes per child and there was a break in between after the first 20 minutes. These children also participated in the focus group interviews. Although the researcher came across a number of well-being tools such as those from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), this study chose to use the key domains reflected in Senefeld et al., (2009) - the OVC well-being tool. Domains such as health, access to food, community relations were used to phrase an open-ended question that is composed in the interview guide. The domains are most suitable because they are part of the well-being tool that has been piloted and applied in a number of African countries such as Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Vietnam, and Zambia and in a local setting of post-war areas (CRS, 2009). These domains are culturally fitting as compared to the domains in the WHO tool and the UNDP tools that have been applied in the Western world in countries such as United States and may not be very suitable for the local African context.

### 6.9.3 Tape Recorder

In this study, an audio tape recorder tool was used to collect supplementary information during the interviews. This method enabled the researcher to bridge the gap that might have arisen during note taking.

### 6.9.4 Camera

This instrument was used to take photographs with permission from the study participants.

### 6.9.5 Draw and Write tool

This tool was in the form of instructions that were also shared verbally with the study participants as detailed in sub-section 6.8.3 of this chapter. Pieces of plain papers and pens were used by each of the ten (10) individual child participants. These same children also participated in the FGIs. By using this tool, child participants illustrated and wrote their individual experiences regarding social injustices they have experienced in their lives. The tool was applied in the collection of information on objective 3 and 4 of the study concerning the children's well-being and social justice issues.

### 6.10 Credibility and Trustworthiness

Credibility is aimed at ensuring trustworthiness through transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004:64). The researcher designed an interview guide and other study instruments. The objectives of the study were scrutinised for relevance, suitability, appropriateness and clarity. Some necessary changes were made for purposes of clarity, integrity and comprehensiveness with the objective to capture key issues about gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war reconstruction in the Acholi sub-region. Prior to the interview, more than an hour was spent building a relationship and rapport with the children. The time spent with other key informants for the same purpose was much less. This quality time was meant to build trust and confidence. Study participants then engaged in conversation and shared an account of their own experience relating to gender relations as it unfolds in their household as children with physical disabilities involved in hazardous labour.

The research tools were pre-tested in Odeke sub-county with similar community characteristics. This was done after the tools had been translated into Acholi, a native language in

the geographical area in the natural setting. The researcher worked with a native research assistant in each district who assisted with the translation and pre-testing of the study tools.

Triangulation was used by utilising various methods such as focus group interviews, individual interviews, draw and write technique, observation and taking of field notes as recommended by some researchers (Shenton, 2004:65). This was meant to substantiate the findings. This significantly helped to reduce bias and errors and thus helped to guarantee reliability of the study findings (Welman & Kruger, 2004:183-184). It also helped to compensate for the limitations of each of the methods as detailed in sub-sections 6.8.1 of this chapter. Study participants were also given an opportunity to refuse to participate if they so wished. Consequently, only those genuinely willing to take part were interviewed.

## 6.11 Research Procedure

Creswell (2014:237) and Marshall and Rossman (1999) advise on the importance of gaining accesses to the research site and seeking authorisation from gatekeepers prior to interviewing study participants. On approval of the study, permission and clearance to conduct the research was sought from the relevant authorities and offices as detailed in sub-section 6.14 of this chapter. All relevant offices provided introductory letters. For instance, below is the researcher showing an introductory letter from the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to the Local Council Chairperson in the community for authorisation to proceed and conduct the interviews with children and their parents and caretakers.

*The Local Council Chairperson (right) and his Vice Chair (Left) reading an introductory letter obtained by the researcher from the office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Gulu district (**Source**: Author, 2018)*

Prior to conducting the study, two (2) research assistants were identified across the study area (male and female). Normally, people speak more freely to peers who know their local language, than to strangers. The research assistants were also trained in data collection methods, basic skills on how to record interviews and observation as well as ethical considerations of research with children. They were also involved in translating and pre-testing the study tools. During the study, each paired with the researcher in the respective district.

The data collection process was conducted over a period of one month. As an introduction to the interview, the research team explained the purpose of the study and sought consent from each participant to allow pictures to be taken and tape recording where applicable. Light refreshments (e.g., soft drinks and snacks) were served to participants after this activity. The process of data collection and analysis was done following an inductive approach guided by the research questions.

## 6.12 Data Management and Processing

Data were collected following the research questions. It was coded, dated and checked for completeness on a daily basis with specific themes, categories and codes using an inductive qualitative approach. All data were stored separately according to participant category in line with the study objectives. Data from in-depth interviews and from children's focus group interviews were transcribed on a daily basis and organised per content from each objective. Content analysis and critical content themes were created in line with research questions before processing. This was done following the stories created from each study group in relation to each study objective. Examples of what participants have experienced were therefore the first step in understanding factors that have affected their life experience of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. This was also done using the draw and write exercise (Ward and Webster, 2018:378) before the focus group interviews for the primary participants and before in-depth interviews for the key informants. Information was re-written in line with themes emerging from the study questions while playing audio recordings to provide more clarity in meaning thereby ensuring accuracy of the transcription.

## 6.13 Data Analysis

Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1281) identify three types of qualitative content analysis, namely directed, conventional and summative. The directed type of content analysis refers to the application of conceptual categories to new content and if appropriate to apply when existing theory or prior research about a phenomenon that is inadequate would benefit from further description. Besides, summative content analysis involves the counting of content or words as the interpretation of that quantification is included. This study employed manual direct content analysis given that it explored transferability (Aine, 2006: 37). The major objective was to examine how gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability influence each other to impact on the well-being of children in the post-war Acholi sub-region.

The analysis of each of the thirty two (32) interviews with children was done following the directed qualitative content analysis to inform each study objective. Qualitative coding following content analysis of the stories from the study sites was employed (Pillay, 2014:198; Henning et al, 2004).

In particular, the content analysis methods proposed by Merriam (2002:2009) were employed. The researcher first read all gathered information to get a bigger picture (Aine, 2006) and compiled responses from the different groups of participants to generate one story per study objective. This also applied to the writing and drawing exercise outcomes. The content of interview transcripts from stories were then read carefully for thorough scrutiny. The key phrases and text segments that correspond to the research questions were tagged accordingly. Significant statements, sentences and quotes were noted to provide an understanding of how the study participants experienced gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. The researcher captured the themes that appear as major findings and these are used as headings in the section on findings in Chapter Seven and Eight (Creswel, 2014:249). These display numerous viewpoints from the focus group interviews and are supported with assorted quotations and evidence. Narrative passages are used in this study to convey findings of the analysis. The researcher searched for multiple interpretations from the voices of the study participants. In particular, the primary researcher probed for diversity of ideas and any unusual perspectives (Creswell, 2014:249). The items (sentences/phrases/statements) were then assembled into a table in line with each of the research questions.

It should be noted that the researcher distinguished other text segments that were important but not expected and coded them accordingly. The similarities in data from the different study sites (urban-Gulu and rural -Nwoya) were highlighted, and categories and constructs were compared with other data in this whole process. In summary, a five-step process was followed during data analysis which was adopted from Ward and Webster (2018), namely a) raw data informed the stories, and interview transcripts as well as written reflections were compiled as a way of organising it before any analysis; b) significant statements and quotes were highlighted and codes were created and organised into categories; c) categories were condensed into clusters of meaning after reading through all the data and after having paid attention to each line of text as affirmed by Creswell (2014:245).

Although a computer would have been the most efficient to store and locate qualitative data, the researcher found it more convenient to hand code the data even if it was a slower process. After hand coding the data, the researcher assigned relevant codes. The researcher then organised the data and ensured it was ready for analysis. The initial themes such as power relations, resource allocation and utilisation, decision-making, hazardous child labour and activities performed,

hazardous child labour and payment, hazardous child labour and disability, norms and traditions, all influencing factors, were reviewed further to refine, combine, or separate them, and to generate overarching themes characterised by internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. The researcher examined the credibility and validity of themes with respect to data set by moving back and forth between the data extracts for codes and themes (Thomas, 2012). The similarities and differences between the themes were analysed to maintain meaning of the data given the urban and rural setting of the research site. The researcher then reviewed the final set of themes to ensure that research questions were answered. Consequently, in this study the findings are reported based on the themes using direct quotations from the data set.

Finally, the researcher interpreted the results in particular to the lessons learnt, the new questions that need to be asked and attempts to compare the narrative outcome to both the social justice theory and well-being theory, and the general literature on the study topic (Creswell, 2014:249). The study findings were verified in a dissemination workshop held at a venue provided by Nwoya Women's Development Initiative. Child participants were key in this process and appropriate child friendly feedback was ensured ((Berman et al., 2016:20). The two research assistants played a key role in this whole process, including translating when a need arose.

## 6.14 Ethical Considerations

Although it is vital to value our children, namely their lives, situation, needs and aspirations, the services and form of support required meeting their needs, the researcher found it vital to also consider sound moral principles in doing so to avoid exploitation. The researcher ensured realisation of children's rights all through the research process as advised by Dalyot and Dalyot (2017:188), Pillay (2014:195), Putfall and Unsworth (2004:1-21) and Berman et al., (2006:10). It is therefore important that researchers, learners and policy makers always acknowledge this central research principle. Children's rights are defined by the United Nations Convention on the rights of a Child (UNCRC) as follows:

> "[...] a set of universal entitlements for every child and young person below age eighteen. These entitlements apply to every child of every background such as children with physical disabilities, those affected by armed conflict and include what they need to survive and have chance to lead stable, rewarding lives" (Pillay, 2014: 195; Save the Children, 2006:4).

A number of categories of rights are aligned to the above definition, namely the right to be safe and survive, the right to food, the right to health, the right to education, the right to belong, and the right to develop (ibid) among others (Pillay, 2014:195; Covell, Howe & McNeil 2010:117-132). Countries such as South Africa that were historically known for the marginalisation of and discrimination against children (Pillay, 2014:194) as well as other developing countries need to consider these ethical aspects more seriously.

In addition, this research on children was also cognisant of the four core principles, namely the best interests of the child, the right to non-discrimination, survival and development, the right to life as well as child participation in decisions made about the child as suggested by Pillay, (2014:195) and Ludbrook, Viviers and Lombard, (2013:7-210). This is aimed at impacting positively on the lives of children in this study. Although some scholars such as Pillay (2014:196), Sewpaul and Matthias (2013:3-6) and Kasiye (2007), argue that child participation in decisions affecting their lives is impossible in sub-Saharan Africa where violation of human rights is incited by undemocratic governments through armed conflict, this study ensured children's full participation on issues relevant to their lives in the post-war context. The best interests of the child were prioritized during this study. Their voices were heard and responded to throughout the research process (Berman et al., 2016:21). Furthermore, the support of children's parents and guardians was gained as well as time availability for both children and their parents/caretakers ( Berman et al., 2016:24). Pillay (2014:196) exposes the weakness of many researchers who only place an emphasis on moral principles and obligation and the importance of values and the protection of children from danger and harm during the research process. Ethical considerations in this study went far beyond this narrow focus of looking at ethics only in terms of justice, beneficence and respect for the child. In addition, this study considered the cultural and gender aspects throughout the process.

Furthermore, the study also followed the core principles in planning and conducting research as highlighted by Powell et al. (2012) that consider working with children during field research, namely involvement of children in the research, consent and choice, possible harm or distress as well as privacy and confidentiality. In this study, the beliefs, values and preferences of children were highly considered as along with their representation. The environment was supportive of their personal agency and dignity. Children had an opportunity

to make choices in the focus groups they joined and stated their opinions during focus group interviews. Berman et al., (2016:16) affirms this aspect and terms it as 'respect' of study participants in all evidence-generating activities. This was in recognition of children's evolving capabilities. Child participants were requested to give written consent to participate in the study before interviewing them using the consent form provided. It consisted of agreeing to participate and allowing for action photographs to be taken. Fortunately, all purposively sampled children accepted to participate and there was no refusal of consent. Child participants were informed that their views are kept confidential and their names were not mentioned anywhere. The form also stated that they could leave the project whenever they wished to and were encouraged to raise any concerns or questions any time during sessions. All children stayed to the end of the interviews. It is important to note that these children have received limited professional attention before. Therefore, an opportunity to reflect on their experiences was designed to be not only a fact finding but also a self-reflective process. At the end of the interview sessions, it was observed that children seemed to have deeply reflected and understood their situation. This was noted when some of them asked whether there were possible alternatives for them to go back to school to benefit from the Universal Primary (UPE) and Secondary Education (USE) for a better future. This finding suggests that this study offers valuable new insights not only to children but also to their families and communities (Berman et al., 2016). As a researcher and social worker together with a counsellor that was part of the team, we attended to children that became emotional and needed professional help. Two children were visibly relieved to be able to express their emotions by having an opportunity to cry in a supportive environment.

Throughout the research process the research assistants were advised to be gender sensitive and were conscientised in view of the ethical considerations in research on and with children. In summary, researchers were well equipped with the seven key issues that this research considered since it involved children as primary participants. These include but are not limited to: consistency with broader humanitarian principles; power relations; harms and benefits; informed consent; privacy and confidentiality; payment compensation and auxiliary services; as well as communication of results (Berman et al., 2016: 18). The research assistants were also trained in child-friendly interview techniques and each signed a confidentiality form.

Parents and caretakers of children participating in the study signed a consent form permitting their minors to take part (See Appendix D for all consent forms and letters). The form clearly indicates the risks and discomforts, benefits involved and protection of confidentiality. Failure of parents/caretakers to sign meant refusal of consent for their minors to participate in the study and this was strictly followed. It should be noted that the study participants were informed at the start of the study that their participation was completely voluntary and they could pull out at any point without any penalty (Pillay, 2014: 199). Notably, there is no mention of any name of any study participant in this study. This is aimed at keeping confidentiality.

All information from the participants was kept anonymous and confidential; accessible to the researcher and the advisor/supervisor only, and the instruments were securely locked away. In order to ensure confidentiality, safe, private physical locations were identified where interviews took place.

Well aware of the considerations for research on children, the researcher sought ethical approval for this study from the relevant institutions. First, the researcher obtained an Ethical Clearance letter for data collection from the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), and the Institute for Social Development (ISD). The next step was to get ethical clearance from the Institutional Ethical Review Board (IRB) of Gulu University, which was successfully approved. Gulu University is located in the Acholi sub-region where this study was conducted. Ethical clearance was also sought from the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST). In addition, approval was sought from the Offices of the Chief Administrative Officers of Gulu and Nwoya districts and relevant letters of authorisation were obtained (See Appendix A for all ethical approval letters). Data collection procedures were then followed while implementing the above ethical principles.

After data collection, a validation workshop was held with the interviewees in both Nwoya and Gulu districts to confirm the results after the first stage of data analysis. A dissemination plan for providing feedback and follow up was designed in order to remain ethical as proposed by scholars such as Pillay (2014:204). A dissemination workshop was planned to involve selected study participants' representatives, namely children and parents/caretakers. It also included local and cultural leaders and staff of CSOs. A dissemination workshop would involve students and staff of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Ndejje University, and staff of the youth and children's

department under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in Kampala. A dissemination workshop is also scheduled for early 2021 with stakeholders at national level, including staff of organisations working with children, disabled people's organisations, Members of Parliament representing youth, disability representatives at national level among others. In addition, copies of study findings would be shared with institutions that supported in this whole study process, namely the Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC) in New York and the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) in South Africa. The researcher gave a clear explanation to the study participants and relevant authorities on the objectives of the study throughout the field processes. Information sheets were also designed (See Appendix E). Lastly, a manuscript is being prepared and articles are in the process to be submitted to various peer-reviewed journals. Please see **Appendix F** for a detailed dissemination plan.

### 6.15 Limitations

All research results display a number of limitations and this study is no exception despite efforts aimed at preventing them. Firstly, the study instruments had not been validated anywhere, not even in the Ugandan context and pre-testing them posed some challenges. However, as envisaged, pre-testing was adequate because the study tools had a focus on concepts that are familiar in the Acholi community. Furthermore, the study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and physical disability are also globally known. High financial costs were required for transport, accommodation and upkeep during the period of stay and travelling back and forth in the field to the Gulu and Nwoya districts. The researcher used part of the grant from the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) in South Africa to facilitate the exercise. In addition, the rainy season in both districts posed challenges as it rained on a daily basis and children could not report to their informal employment venues in such weather. The researcher had to re-schedule one appointment at a stone quarrying site in Gulu for the following day while two other appointments for Nwoya were also re-scheduled. A lot of travel time was spent from Kampala in Central Uganda to Gulu and then Nwoya districts in northern Uganda. However, the researcher was firm and excited that she was on track to meet the study participants and to collect data. Another limitation was the politicisation of the exercise since some people thought the researcher was a government official lobbying for votes for the next political election period.

## 6.16 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter highlighted the various steps taken in answering the study questions on the three themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. It also presents justification for decisions taken for each of the steps explained. The relevance of a multi-method choice in this study cannot be overstated. The methodical option does not oppose the theoretical framework in Chapter Five in this study.

131

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL RESULTS,

# ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION PART 1 - SOCIAL JUSTICE

## 7.1 Chapter Introduction

The study findings are presented in two separate chapters, namely seven and eight in order to ensure clarity between the findings related to the social justice approach and those related to the well-being approach respectively. This does not mean that wellbeing and social justice outcomes do not often overlap, but only that these themes are separated for the sake of clearer interpretation. Both chapters present findings on how gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability influence each other to impact on the well-being of children in the post- war context of the Acholi sub-region in Uganda.

This chapter presents the general findings and those related to research question one, components regarding social justice, as well as study question three that is directly connected to the social justice approach. It includes the following: a) What is the nature of gender relations in households with working children with disability? b) What is the impact of the existing social justice system on hazardous child labour in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda?

The findings were generated from the districts of Nwoya and Gulu using research methods, namely focus group interviews (FGIs), in-depth individual interviews, observation, and some research techniques such as draw and write technique and note taking. Reference is made to the stories of participants generated in their respective FGI in relation to their lived experiences and their voices are considered as being very crucial. A detailed analysis and discussion of findings are undertaken in both chapters. Data are scrutinised while highlighting key issues raised with linkages to literature and theory. The researcher also analyses and comments on the themes derived by means of grounded theory that emerged from the analysis of the study findings and follows after each objective.  Before focusing on the findings, it is first necessary to provide an overview of the biographical profiles of the study participants.

**7.1.1 Biographical data**

All biographical information was derived from the questionnaire. The study involved children with physical disabilities that are trapped in hazardous labour in the areas of agricultural farming, sand mining, stone quarrying and petty trade. The findings were gathered from the children, as well as the key informants, who were parents and caretakers of these children. There were eighty (80) children *(Female=48 and Male=32)* while the parents and caretakers were also eighty (80) in number *(Female=46, Male=34)*. A total number of 160 participants were reached by the time of saturation (80 children, 80 parents/caretakers). The percentage of female primary study participants (children) was higher than males *(48 girls compared to 32 boys)*. This was intended during the purposive sampling of five participants per focus group where the fifth participant in each group was female. Consequently, girls were given a voice of representation, to enable them to be more noticeable and visible given that there are sometimes differences in their styles of social interaction and they may not be as active as boys.

**Figure 5**: *Number and category of study participants*
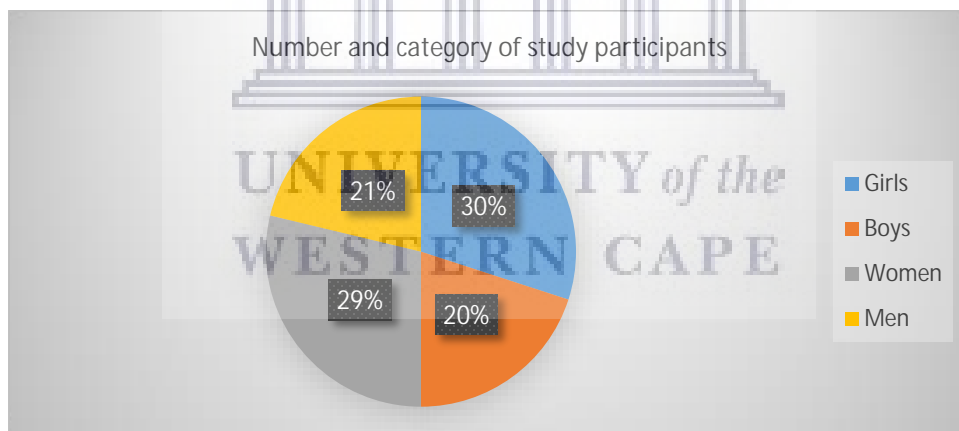
As displayed in Figure 5, the number of primary study participants (children who are the research subjects) and the key informants (adults) are depicted. There were more girls (30%) and more women (29%) compared to their male counterparts *(Boys=20% and Men=21%)*. The reason for this is explained in the previous introductory paragraph on biographical data. It however needs to be noted that each focus group interviews was composed of male and female participants. Although there were more female participants in FGIs for children *(48 girls and 32 boys),* on the

whole, males and females were fairly represented, not only in number but also in having equal opportunity to share their stories.

**Figure 6:** *Age of study participants*
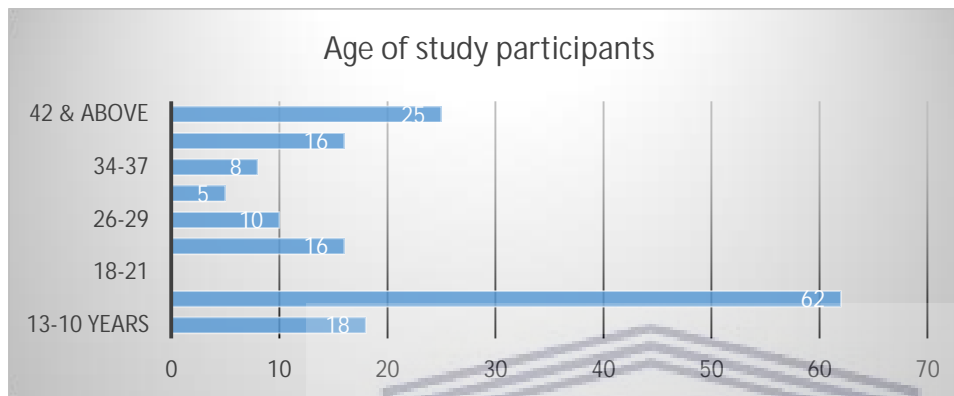
Child participants were aged between 10 and 17. As displayed in Figure 6, there were eighteen (18) children aged between 10-13 years while those aged 14-17 were sixty two (62). There were no caretakers aged 18-22. Sixteen (16) caretakers were aged 22-25, ten (10) were aged 26-29 and five (5) were aged 31-33. In addition, eight (8) caretakers were aged 34-37 while sixteen (16) of them were aged 38 - 41. Twenty five (25) of the caretakers were aged 42 years and above. The majority of the child participants were aged 14-17 compared to others who were aged 10-13. One can conclude that the largest numbers of children with physical disabilities in hard and risky labour are aged 14-17. The youngest of the caretakers was between 22 and 25 years old. More parents and caretakers were aged 42 and above compared to other age brackets. This finding affirms that these parents/caretakers are in the age category that have experienced two decades of war and are still experiencing its impact, including a high poverty level that seems to be a driving factor for their children with physical disabilities to participate in hazardous child labour thus adding to the vulnerability in families.

**Figure 7:** *Education level of study participants*



Education level of study participants
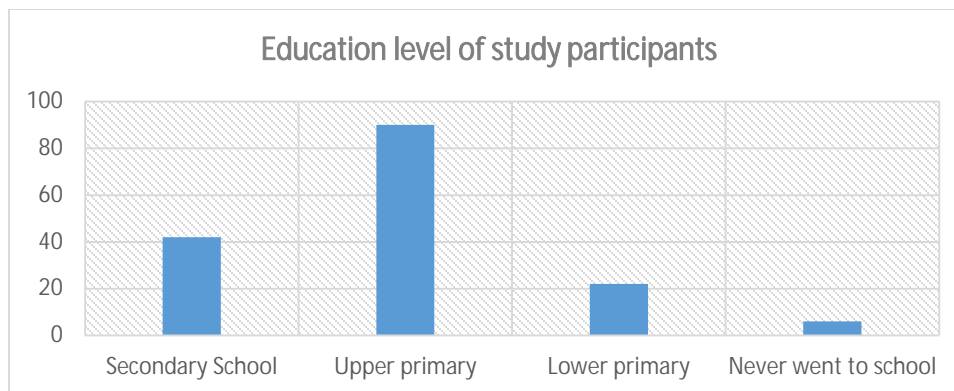
**Source:** *Primary data, 2018.*

As can be seen from Figure 7 above presenting the education level of study participants, ninety (90) participants are educated to upper primary level. Twenty two (22) of the participants dropped out at lower primary, forty two (42) reached secondary school level while six (6) never went to school at all. The latter were parents/caretakers that never went to school at all. Given that the study never involved parents and caretakers in the draw and write exercise, this did not have any negative impact on the study. It should be noted that the education level of child participants is analysed together with that of their parents/caretakers. Notably, despite the war environment, some of the parents and caretakers seem to have maneuvered and attended school in facilities that were set up in camps at the time.

*A brief description of forms of physical disabilities of the child study participants*

Although physical disabilities are categorized into different sub-forms such as spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, rheumatism, muscular dystrophy, amputees and Tourette syndrome, the Table below reflects the different forms of physical disabilities/impairments that our child study participants live with.

As highlighted in figure 2 below, six (6) child participants were wheelchair users with physical disability due to mobility impairments, eight (8) child participants had blinking eye/s, seven (7) child participants had a single ear each while fifteen (15) children live with disproportionate dwarfism commonly referred to as little persons that represent the majority in the study. Besides being generally short, some of them had body parts such as legs and hands smaller than others. These are too short and require specialised services such as an adjusted hoe for the garden work,

an adjusted hammer for crushing gravels among other items that they require in order to perform work activities. In addition, six (6) had between one to two missing toes each. Eight (8) child participants had missing fingers, seven (7) child participants had clubfoot where a foot was twisted out of shape with two of them having a foot that presents upside down. Seven (7) children had rickets visible on their legs while nine (9) child participants experience epileptic conditions with an interval of between one to two epileptic attacks in a month. One (1) child participant lives with albinism.

*Table 2: Summary of description of types of child participants' forms of physical disabilities*

| Form of physical disability | Number and Sex of participants | Total number | District |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wheelchair users with broken/crippled legs | *F=3, M=3* | 06 | Gulu |
| Blinking Eye/s | *F=4, M=4* | 08 | Nwoya &Gulu |
| Dwarfisms/ Little Persons (short limb & missing limb/Short legs and those that are generally short by physical make up) | *F=9, M=06* | 15 | Nwoya & Gulu |
| Cleft lip | *F=4, M=2* | 06 | Nwoya &Gulu |
| Missing toes | *F=4, M=2* | 06 | Nwoya/Gulu |
| Albinism | *M=1* | 01 | Gulu |
| Club foot | *F=5M=2* | 07 | Nwoya&Gulu |
| Missing fingers | *F=4 M=04* | 08 | Nwoya and Gulu |
| Missing ear | *F=5, M=2* | 07 | Nwoya and Gulu |
| Rickets of legs | *F=4, M=3* | 07 | Nwoya and Gulu |
| Epilepsy | *F=6, M=3* | 09 | Nwoya and Gulu |
| **Total number of child participants** | **F=48 M=32** | **80** | |

**Source:** *Primary data, 2020*

The findings reveal that besides albinism, girls live with other forms of disabilities more than boys. This was the case in both Gulu and Nwoya districts. However, this does not rule out the fact that there could be girls with albinism in child labour.

The findings reveal that children with one short limb and another with a missing limb were mainly involved in stone quarrying activities and expressed that the crushing of gravels with one hand was most appropriate for them than other available options such as agriculture and sand mining. The findings divulge that most of the above forms of physical disabilities can be categorised as mild and moderate impairments and children can move without depending on appliances except for the six children that are wheelchair users. The researcher did not set out to the field to trace children with these particular forms of disabilities but only had in mind children with physical disabilities and it so happened that the above forms of physical disabilities were visible and common at the sites where children practiced hazardous labour (Refer to Table 2 above). Surprisingly, in five FGIs (3 in Nwoya and 2 in Gulu), parents pointed to other children under their care such as those with sickle cell anaemia and haemophilia. These are invisible forms of disability that have just recently been considered in Uganda under the broader forms of disability.

It was found out that the common forms of physical disabilities highlighted in Table 2 were not directly connected to the war because children under this study were born after the war. All children with missing ears, clubfoot, missing limbs and little people were born with various forms of disabilities while others who suffers from epilepsy, have missing fingers and toes had acquired this disability during hazardous labour. However, as expressed by some of the children and their caretakers, the high poverty levels brought about by the war contributed majorly to them becoming disabled. For instance, children with clubfoot were treated in hospital if their parents/caretakers had financial resources and knew when and where to access support at an early age. It was established that although many of the parents strongly believed in witchcraft, fourteen (14) of them from twelve (12) different groups affirmed that they did not access antenatal care when sick during pregnancy yet suffered from severe malaria and malnutrition. They were unaware of the likely connection between disability and lack of medical care during pregnancy. It is therefore most likely that some of these disabilities were a result of malnutrition and severe malaria during pregnancy. Notably, twelve (12) children from the Gulu study sites affirmed that they lost their toes and fingers during quarrying activities.

Notably, there were also three (3) parents/caretakers *(F=2, M=1)* with physical disabilities. They were in a wheelchair during the interviews. Two of them were from Nwoya while one was from Gulu District. It was not intentional or purposive to sample these parents and caretakers. Instead, they automatically qualified for the study because of the involvement of the children under their care. The finding of parents/caretakers with physical disabilities was purely coincidental. It can be concluded that the physical form of disability is the most common among children in hazardous child labour. This study targeted children with physical disabilities and more so among the parents and caretakers, it was purely coincidental that those with disabilities showed up with physical disability forms. The rest of the key informants did not have any form of disabilities.

## 7.2 Definitions of study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability as explained by the study participants

For study participants to react objectively to the research instruments, it was vital to analyse how they conceptualise the key terms, namely gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability. Therefore, the participants in the focus group interviews that were held in Nwoya and Gulu districts expressed views that later resulted in agreement on the working definitions. Selection of the study participants was through a purposive technique and was done specifically for those that qualified as per the inclusion criteria highlighted in Chapter One, subsection 1.4.4 and in Chapter Six under the methodology in sub-section 6.7.

### 7.2.1 Gender relations:

Child participants arrived at the following consensual definition of gender relations:

> *Gender relations in Acholi culture imply how both men and women relate with each other in their day-to-day life, especially in terms of roles and responsibilities, decision-making and resource allocation[22]"*

Parents and caretakers asserted:

> *Gender relations mean respect, working together, power balancing, access and allocation of resources as well as taking decisions for all to benefit from the existing resources.*

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[22] FGI for disabled working children, Gulu District FGI 11 on 14.09.2018

From the above FGI ideas, it is clear that the study participants have a common understanding of gender relations. The agreed definition corresponds with the findings of Calasanti (2010:720) in Chapter Four who asserts that gender is relational where men and women operate within a network of complex gender relations.

***Box 1: Other interesting findings on views of child participants regarding gender relations***

Two FGIs of child participants compared gender relations to *"Cubulawala"* meaning that *"it is a game that takes people to two different sides where there is competition such as two sides wanting to spear in the same hole[23]"*.

Children also compared it to *"training boys to acquire military skills and hunting skills to catch a lion.  Girls are not trained in skills of this nature not because they cannot manage but it is not meant for them in our culture[24]"*.

*"Gender relations mean how people perceive the beliefs, practices and relationships in connection to their culture. Gender relations begin with perceptions and people's beliefs level[25]"*

For parents and caretakers, the following views surfaced during the FGI:

*Gender relations start with perceptions of how people relate to the beliefs that are influenced by their culture and emphasize that beliefs influence the understanding of gender relations[26].*

**7.2.2 Hazardous child labour**

It is vital to begin with an understanding of the background of hazardous child labour in the Acholi sub-region as explained by the parents and caretakers who represent a generation of children during the war as these would have had an influence on the next generation; the children that are the focus in this study express what they have heard from their parents/caretakers.

Parents and caretakers emphasise that hazardous child labour in the Acholi sub-region has its roots in a number of factors which are a result of armed conflict. First, the most disturbing

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[23] FGI 9, Child participants, District on Wed, 14.09.2018

[24] FGI 2, Child participants, Nwoya District Mon.17.09.2018

[25] FGI 14,15 & 16, Child participants, Nwoya District Mon.19.09.2018

[26] Definition from the FGI with parents/caretakers of children in Gulu District 25.10.2018

finding is that participants narrate how the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels abducted children and trained them as child soldiers to offer their labour. They also narrate how children were being trained in the bush and those abducted were taken to the Garamba Training Camp in South Sudan. A number of children received training in military tactics for example, on how to load a gun. They were also indoctrinated that the Museveni government is bad, and that they needed to defend their land and people. Every child had to go through military training before receiving a uniform and a gun. Other children were instructed to kill, especially those rebels that tried to escape, and this was a way of letting the children know that if any of them tried to escape, they would be killed in the same way. This emerged from four stories of caretakers where in three out of the four groups, it was mainly emphasised by females. It is important to remember that these were mixed groups that had both male and female caretakers/parents. These findings relate to what was established by Save the Children (2018:22), Nasongo (2015:17) and Ben-Arieh et.al (2014:3087) when they observed that recruitment of child soldiers during armed conflict had effects and direct consequence that resulted in stress and psychological trauma (See Chapter Three).

A most unexpected discovery was that during the war period, children also made use of fellow children by enticing them to join the army, work and earn for survival[27]. This was raised in five groups of which two were for caretakers from Nwoya while three were groups of children. This finding is also affirmed by (Cheney, 2005) in Chapter One. Secondly, it was established that the business community took advantage of children's cheap labour, especially during and soon after the war. *"We sent our children to offer cheap labour because we lacked the power and voice to negotiate for better pay. It was so competitive that if any of us refused to give in our children to work, many more parents were willing to take the space'*[28]. The findings divulge that these children had no other option but to offer their cheap labour for survival. In addition, informal employers had the awareness that cheap labour could only be offered by children. This finding is similar to that of Blattman & Annan (2010) in Chapter Three who confirm that hazardous child labour is often one of the consequences of armed conflict. It is most likely that the practice exposes children to all other forms of exploitation, especially the girl child that is vulnerable sexually, socially, and economically with a likely occurrence of gender-based violence and other forms of

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[27] FGI 3, children, Nwoya District

[28] FGI 1, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

exploitation, not only during the post war context but in any other context thereby violating their rights (Amendment (2016) to the Ugandan Childrens' Act, 1997:5.

Thirdly, the study findings reveal that there was inadequate access to health care, education and social amenities all through the conflict period and after[29]. Thus some of the children's basic needs remained unmet. This finding contradicts with that of Tran et al., (2011:1190) in Chapter Three who concludes that transportation serves as a barrier to accessing services. One can conclude that such circumstances would have enticed parents/caretakers and children to explore child labour as the available option, and yet it turns out to be hazardous. Fourthly, the study findings point to families that had no money to provide for the needs of children, with a strong belief that children must also strive to work like anybody else and contribute to putting food on table[30]. To make matters worse, some children remained without parents, families and clans. Children that remained on their own had to work and fend for their own survival. In addition, given that unemployment was very high during the war period, the bread winners earned very little yet the dependency ratio in families had increased. Child labour became part of the option for survival. It was somewhat surprising to find out that by culture, Acholi families believe that having many children is a source of wealth, security and a survival strategy, thus a major setback today. During the war children became a burden to their families as participants explain, *"It eventually turned out to be "for God and myself. Many parents never bothered much about children and it was worse if a child had a disability as this required more care and support"*[31]. Indeed, these findings are in line with the work of Abdalla et al., (2018; 1) and Mervyn (2013; 158) that reveal hazardous child labour being widespread (See Chapter Four). From the above voice, it is clear that this parent had experienced child labour too.

Four focus groups of five parents and caretakers from Gulu disclosed that the presence of IDP camps around the town centre with a high concentration of people fighting for survival makes petty trade easy, thus resulting in the involvement of children. This is a surprising finding after over fifteen years of the government declaring that camps should be dissolved and people are expected to have gone back to their original homes given the relative peace that prevails at present.

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[29] FGI 2, parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[30] FGI, 1, parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[31] FGI 1, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

This finding may be compared to other studies which confirm the negative social outcomes of armed conflict (see Chapter two sub-section 2.5; Nasongo, (2015:85); and Cheney, (2005:12). Similarly, six parents from Nwoya that belonged to three different focus groups narrate how they were raped during the 2005/7 armed conflict period and became child mothers. Today, each has between 7-8 children under their care, with less potential to meet their basic needs. Two of these participants confess to the practice of having automatically subjected two of her children, including an epileptic child, to hazardous labour at the rice farm where he works five days a week. The parent indicates it as the easiest option for family survival. The experience of this parent is similar to the findings of Mehus (2018: 3), Ottisova et al. (2018), Infuma et al. (2015: 2) and Spitzer and Kwikiriza (2012:72) that confirm the severe consequences of trauma during war and a post-war period. Notably, one can conclude that is highly likely that such trauma would cascade to children.

In addition, the current study observes that some parents and caretakers are aged while others live with some forms of disabilities without any meaningful source of income. Instead, they depend on their grandchildren for a livelihood. Children with epilepsy, clubfeet and other forms of physical disabilities earn to support their grandparents through hazardous labour[32]. This finding is affirmed by Terres de Hommes (2016), Annan (2010) (see Chapter 3 sub-section 3.4) when they refer to hazardous child labour as one of the direct effects of armed conflict.

Next we explore various ways of how participants describe hazardous child labour.
*"Hazardous child labour is when a child with physical disability is employed without any signed contract to work for pay yet the conditions are harmful to his/her health physically, morally, social and mentally while denying a child access to other opportunities such as schooling yet s/he is below age 18 stipulated by the Uganda Constitution, in Chapter 1-Article 34".*

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) Chapter one, Article 34 (4) and CRC article 1 set the age limit and are therefore in agreement with the above finding. Similarly, the findings of Abdalla et al. (2018:1), ILO IPEC,(2006: 1), Bass (2004: 6), Anumaka (2013:55) also subscribe to the above finding. The definition is broad enough and covers some domains of well-being of children highlighted in Chapter Five under sub-section 5.1.

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[32] FGI 1, children, Gulu District

*Box 2: Other voices of study participants*

> *"In the Acholi context, hazardous child labour refers to a child being employed for pay when s/he is below age 14. In our culture, someone aged 14 or 15 especially in a rural setting, one can be married in a traditional context. Such a person begins to take decisions and also must work to earn a living and society expects him/her to support other family members and relatives.. [33].*

A closer look at the quotations in Box 2 above reveals that in the Acholi cultural context, hazardous child labour is mainly directed at children under age 14 as those that marry after age 14 are considered adults. This finding is contrary to the definition of 'child' in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda and in the relevant international instruments such as the CRC highlighted in Chapter 4. However, there is no universal minimum age for marriage globally. The researcher observes that as a characteristic, in less developed countries, the age for marriage is lower compared to developed nations where people tend to marry when they're older. By implication, such child brides start to engage in hazardous labour for pay in the name of fending for their families, and this presents a lost opportunity to enjoy childhood. Amid poverty brought by the war, the already vulnerable children such as those in this study cannot fail to be affected and seem to continue to be affected making it difficult for the realisation of children's rights. The next sub-section explores participants' views on the concept of disability.

**7.2.3 Disability**

Similar to the above concepts of gender relations and hazardous child labour, the aim of asking study participants to attach meaning to disability was to find out their understanding of disability as a constructed concept and enable them to react to the different study questions in a more relevant way. The following was an agreed definition:

*"Disability is a physical condition or injury on a child's body and he or she has lived with it for a period of at least one year even when s/he has several other forms of disabilities"[34].*
This definition is representative of children targeted in this study.

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[33] FGI Child Participants FGI 10, Nwoya district, 18.9. 2018

[34] All FGI s, Participants of children, parents and caretakers, Nwoya and Gulu districts

*Box 3: Other compelling views of study participants on disability*

> "Disability is the inability to do work yet even anyone without the teeth can eat[35]".
>
> "Disability means that part of one's body is dysfunctional and the person does not perform except the teeth[36]".
>
> "We use the term "Lagoro' (singular) in our language to refer to the visually impaired, those who cannot talk, the lame, those who cannot hear and are all labeled as incapable of doing work. It also means a weak person. We are always compared to weak people but we are not weak. Instead, it is it is our body that does not appear normally and so we do not want to be called "Lugoro[37]" (plural). "Disability is a situation where a child does not have all the body system functioning in a normal way"[38].

The descriptions in Box 3 affirm that children define disability depending on their lived experience. These findings are consistent with those of scholars such as Thompson (2017:2) who contends that there is no single adequate description for the term disability. The self-esteem aspect is however vital and life-giving for children as reflected by the social model of disability in Chapter Four. It is one of the many ways through which children's rights to equality, inclusion and access to resources can be achieved while involving them as full societal members. Therefore a human rights-based model referred to as a social approach is reflected. On the contrary, the voices of parents and caretakers in Box 4 below still reflect the traditional views of understanding disability in a multifaceted society.

*Box 4: Reflecting parents and caretakers' understanding of disability*

> "In our culture we believe that disability is when the Acholi 'god' has decided upon that condition for a child, such a child belongs to this small god and that it is that 'god' that has put a mark on the child. By culture, certain rituals have to be performed in the traditional shrine to consult with a witch doctor to advise on the next steps. In Kitgum district, such a child would be thrown in a flowing river and the practice still exists depending on a family's belief Consultation is done with a witch doctor for people to categorize if it is a "normal disability" (has a known

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[35] FGI 1 participants, Gulu district 12.9.2018

[36] FGI 3 and 5 Child participants, Gulu District 13.9.2019

[37] FGI 2 ,3 &5 Child participants, Nwoya District, 18.9.2018

[38] FGI 3, 5, Child participants, Gulu District, 13.9.2018

*cause) or an "abnormal disability" (form of disability without a known cause) then take steps accordingly''[39].*

*"Our culture associates disability with a "bad omen". If a child was born with a disability, the mother would tie the child on her back with a piece of cloth but loosely, she would stand near the water and the child falls in this water. The mother would then make an alarm pretending that the water is flowing with her child and she needs urgent help. Yet it was intentional to get rid of the child born with disability. Today, instead of resorting to that practice, some families just lock children with disabilities inside the house especially when visitors come while others do not bother taking them to school''[40].*

These findings reveal deeply rooted cultural narratives with a plurality of beliefs and practices associated with children with disabilities, as reflected in Boxes 3 and 4 respectively. The findings relate to the traditional way of thinking about disability that see children as a curse and a misfortune and consequently neglected, as confirmed by Braddock & Parish (2013:13), and in Chapter Four, the literature review also concurs with previous studies. This proves the presence of cultural rigidity that is associated with human rights violation such as locking children in the house and denying them some of their basic needs. There is no doubt that the well-being of such children is compromised when denied: social justice is absent. The findings may help us design meaningful interventions for families and communities enabling them to understand and relate to children with physical disabilities in a more social and friendly manner while keeping in mind the human rights-based approach to disability.

Therefore, with a broader understanding and consensus on the concepts of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability, it is central to explore and discuss the study findings related to the social justice approach under objective one and four respectively.

## 7.3 The nature of gender relations in households with working children with physical disability

The purpose of this investigation was to establish the nature of gender relations among households of parents and guardians of children with physical disabilities and whether this has any influence on hazardous child labour. The voices of the study participants are articulated in the findings

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[39] FGI 6,7 &8, Parents and caretakers, Gulu district 12.9.2018

[40] FGI 1,2&3 Parents and caretakers , Nwoya district 16.9.2018

relating to key emerging themes of decision making, resource allocation and utilisation as well as their roles and responsibilities. The key findings derived from stories during the focus group interviews (FGI) and individual interviews are presented and discussed, by pointing to exceptional voices rather than the full interviews. This is also done in line with the issues that were outstanding, common and unique across the interviews, in order to generate meaning. In this sub-section, I begin with an overview of the ideal gender relations in normal constitutional circumstances in Uganda. In analysing the findings, common and outstanding aspects were explored together in how they connect with hazardous child labour.

### 7.3.1 Gender relations under normal constitutional conditions where social justice prevails

The goal of reducing gender inequality has for long been pursued in Uganda. This is evident by her ratification of several Human Rights Conventions. For instance, without any reservations, in 1985, Uganda ratified the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The 2000 Millennium Declaration served a catalyst for this process. The social, cultural and economic rights of women and girls are described in these instruments. In addition, the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda clearly emphasises in Articles 21 and 32 that women and girls and men and boys are equal in dignity and equal before the law. The articles oppose any laws, cultures and customs that are harmful to women and girls. The emphasis here is that women and men shall have equal treatment and equal economic, political and social opportunities. It also suggests that the ideal for gender relations would be a situation where women and girls are treated equally before the law and are equal to their male counterparts in terms of access to resources, decision-making powers, roles and responsibilities among other aspects. Now, the researcher explores the findings on what happens in terms of gender relations in the traditional Acholi culture.

### 7.3.2 A Snapshot of a Gender Rights Assessment in Acholi sub-region

This sub-section gives us an understanding of the current situation of women and girls in Acholi. It also reflects on what can be done to promote equity and equal access for girls and women to ensure gender justice.

The findings reveal that decision making depends largely on the breadwinner in the household and this situation has always been the same in the area with mostly men being responsible for decision making. Men take decisions of sending children to work, negotiating the form of payment and collecting most of what is due to the child from their informal employer. This finding is contrary to the social justice principle of the importance of having an opportunity for decision-making (Fraser, 2010:30), as highlighted in Chapter Four sub-section 4.2.6. The finding also portrays children as being less human and being viewed as objects for exploitation (Amendment (2016) to the Ugandan Childrens' Act, 1997:5). A possible explanation for this finding might be that northern Uganda is deeply rooted in traditional rule that does not attach much value to consulting moreover with children. This points to the northern region as generally not displaying a constitutional rights-based society. Therefore, it is challenging to expect a rights-based approach although it is ideal for strengthening gender relations in families and ensuring gender justice in decision making.

Furthermore, the findings show that differences exist in paid labour. More girls were noted to have often been paid in kind compared to their male counterparts (see Table 3). Children with physical disabilities are denied social justice as they do not have access to the necessary economic and social arrangements to support them that would allow them to reach their goals and aspirations. The bargaining power over child wages needs to be negotiated by these girls and boys with support from their caretakers/parents through formal discussion and documentation with farm/site owners. Moreover, it is bad practice to employ children contrary to the labour laws in Uganda. Ugandan legislation prohibits employment of children below 12 years. The involvement of children aged 12-13 in any form of employment is prohibited unless it is light work that is supervised by adults and children's education remains unaffected. Examples of Ugandan labour laws include the Employment Act (2006), The Occupational Safety Act (2006), the Labour Union Arbitration and Settlement Act (2006) the Workers Compensation Act (2000), the Children (Amendment) Act (2016) that criminalises the use of children for labour exploitation, as well as the Minimum Wages Act (2000) that is  an approved piece of legislation but hardly enforced.  Uganda is bound to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and she is supposed to enforce labour rights that are part of human rights as enshrined in Article 23 of the declaration.

It is also worth noting that the above laws and policies constitute Uganda's value system and expresses social justice principles of equity, inclusion, diversity and the respect for human dignity that embraces the need for fair relations between individuals and society. However, this study seems to suggest that in certain circumstances children, and especially those with disabilities, do not benefit from the law. For instance, employers that are aware of the above labour laws opt for an informal working relationship that allows for the exploitation of children with disability (Amendment (2016) to the Ugandan Childrens' Act, 1997:5). This implies that those that informally employ and exploit children do not care about social justice and neither are they child rights defenders.

Furthermore, although this study purposively recruited more girls than boys, it was easy to find girls with disabilities in hazardous labour. Specifically, there were more girls engaged in stone quarrying; an activity that is usually perceived as difficult and meant for men. The possible reason for this could be that it is the best manageable option for children with disabilities such as those with one active hand. More so, it is an activity that can be accomplished while seated in one place and the rest of its sub-activities can be sorted with the help of another person. This indicates a shift in gender role expectations.

There were also two female caretakers with physical disabilities. Both acquired their disability during the war. Their respective husbands abandoned them and their children a few months after the war. They both narrate being faced with challenges of loneliness, social stigma and poverty[41]. It is important to remember that each of the caretakers/parents in this study has a child with physical disability who is involved in hazardous child labour. Thus the abandonment and poverty could have added to the vulnerability of these girls and boys with physical disabilities, potentially contributing to their involvement in hazardous labour. Breaking the cycle of poverty among women and girls with disabilities would possibly help mitigate the hazardous labour circumstances in their families.

Similarly, the male caretakers with disabilities acquired during the war, as identified in this study, survive from the earnings of the children with disabilities "under their care". Children take on parental roles, and therefore their ability to think, make decisions and apply skills to life

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[41] FGI 3, Nwoya district

challenges may get strengthened in the process. This finding is similar to that of Cheney (2005:24) who acknowledges that hazardous labour makes children deny the status of full partners in social interaction when they are unable to enjoy childhood life. This finding prompted the following questions. Where are the voices of children while they're experiencing this treatment? Where is the local leadership and who is going to pay attention to and ensure equality in society where children's rights to childhood life enjoyment has become impossible?



*One of the caretakers with physical disability who depends on his grandchildren's labour*
*Source: Author, 2020*

This unanticipated finding also affirms the extraordinary vulnerability faced by parents and caretakers that are incapacitated to provide for their families. This is sometimes a forgotten category of people in development practice. Disability of this nature (see photo above) renders the disabled elderly unable to contribute economically to society and as a result disability increases their dependency on children. This situation further propels them into poverty. In the current political economy empowerment of persons with disabilities through skills training is considered vital. There is also no doubt that the high poverty level is connected to psychological consequences such as impaired decision making that compromises the personal and social well-being, not only of the individuals but also their families and communities. This finding can be equated to the understanding of social justice in Chapter Four that proposes social equality and recognition, an

approach that can accommodate the complex relations between identity, economy and culture, class and status in this contemporary globalised capitalist economy.

The findings also reflect that first-born girl children are engaged in hazardous child labour amid physical disabilities (see Table 3). This demonstrates a relationship between socially ascribed gender roles and being the first-born child in a family. There is no doubt that despite their vulnerability, when a family is not able to meet their basic needs, the first-born child takes on the responsibility in all circumstances.

This sub-section has given us an overview of how gender relations are expected to materialise under constitutional conditions as well as gender rights assessment in the Acholi sub-region. Now the researcher explores issues of social justice with regard to child labour in this post-war region.

## 7.4 The impact of the existing social justice systems on hazardous child labour in post-war Acholi

The purpose of this exploration was to establish whether any social justice systems exist in the Acholi sub-region and how these system(s) impacts on hazardous child labour. A criteria of nine key aspects were set for analysing the study findings. The details are highlighted in Chapter Five that explains the theoretical framework under sub-section 5.2.3. The findings are presented starting with community perspectives of social justice.

### 7.4.1 The communal understanding of social justice

The findings reveal that social community cohesion existed during the pre-war period. Morality was high as people committed to raising children morally without subjecting them to paid work. Also, norms of how children relate to themselves, the elderly and outsiders were a strong priority before the war. Family cohesiveness became weak as society disintegrated. Consequently, norms and social values changed drastically.

Participants agreed on the following definition of social justice before discussion of the subject ensued:

*"The way in which people especially children experience human rights issues in their everyday today life in Acholi-sub-region"*

This finding affirms participants' awareness of the human rights approach that serves as a basis for social justice to children and the community at large.

*Other informative comments are:*

"Social justice is a fair way of handling situations that come up such as hazardous child labour and domestic violence"[42]

"Social justice is a way of dealing fairly with issues that arise in society. It is a situation of enforcing the written laws and also the non-written ones that are traditionally known by Acholi community as per our culture aimed at benefiting all people involved"[43].

"Social justice is what is agreed upon to be enforced by the Acholi elders in our local community to promote equality and fairness"[44]

"Social justice is used to mean care that is given to children including observing their rights to land use and traditional ownership"[45].

"It refers to children's entitlement to education rather than only informal education"[46]

"Social justice means that the payment of dowry and marrying off children at age14 deprives them of many of their rights and it is unfair"[47]

"Social justice means allowing children with physical disabilities to be free and share space and assets of the family"[48].

The voices of some participants across the study area affirm an understanding of when their rights get compromised with some mix of lack of differentiation between social justice and the traditional justice system as per their culture. This finding aligns with that of Shriberg et al. (2008:455), who affirm that social justice is hard to define. Although participants had heard about children's rights before, the findings reveal that the Uganda Universal Primary Education (UPE) Policy (1997) which is her main tool for achieving human development and poverty reduction was the only one singled out by children, parents/caretakers. Although this policy is not directly related

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[42] FGI 1, Children, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[43] FGI 3 Children, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[44] FGI 2 Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[45] FGI 1 Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[46] FGI 4 Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[47] FGI 3, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[48] FGI 3, Children , Gulu District 12.9.2018

to disability, gender and child labour, the researcher wonders why parents/caretakers do not ensure that children attend school despite awareness of this government policy. Participants were not aware of any laws related to gender, hazardous child labour and disability in the country and have not participated in any meeting where policies of this nature were discussed. This partly confirms typical ignorance about existing laws as affirmed by Maia and Cal, (2014:63) in Chapter Four, and may also imply that there are no principles to regulate cooperation in promoting social justice to children as Rawls (2004:1) asserts. It is therefore difficult to treat children with disabilities free and equal to others. It may also be implied that there are poor dissemination practices of laws and policies mainly at village level.

### 7.4.2 The local coordination mechanisms on social justice

The findings reveal that people are aware of some mechanism in place for promoting social justice that the Uganda Constitution permits through the local leaders at district, sub-county, village or parish level. This finding partly agrees with that of Fraser (2010:32) by recognising the importance of representation in promoting social justice as highlighted in Chapter 4, 2 and 6. However, despite this level of awareness, the social justice representation seems not to be a reality on the ground because of the way human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of children with physical disabilities in hazardous labour does not reflect much concern about social justice, most significantly that it is morally wrong to employ children and subject them to exploitation.

Notably, the findings reveal that families groom children in the most responsible way. However, some children are subjected to hazardous labour thereby exposing them to physical injuries that seem to remain permanent. For instance, some children are involved in intensive crop harvest as a way of training them, coupled with the interest in making money due to the current cash economy that determines what skills and activities are required for children.

The findings reveal that some families subject children to hard work so that they contribute to family income besides learning to work as a survival skill. Families with some source of income prefer sending children for vocational traditional skills, namely building practices mainly because the government of Uganda is currently putting emphasis on skilling the young generation. Some of these trades are also risky where children are likely to acquire permanent forms of disabilities. Children have however ended up in farming, stone quarrying and sand mining because these do not require particular skills.

*"If all justice was and children with disabilities are well taken care of, it means that they would not be subjected to hazardous child labour especially if they belong to families where most economically productive work is done by grown up family members"*[49].

The findings also reveal that local leaders, parents and caretakers are reluctant to enforce social justice. Therefore, the Ugandan value system has not been well-utilised in eliminating unjust practices such as hazardous child labour. In this way, the sense of identity, and the right to fair redistribution seem to be lost when children with disabilities are in hazardous labour. The hindering factors named by participants include high poverty levels, more so in today's cash economy where people have to fend for their survival. This results in their inability to avoid involving children, especially those with disabilities. Although the study focused on children aged 10-17 years, it was surprising to find children aged five (5) and below engaged in stone quarrying activities. This finding is so surprising because children of this age are often overlooked in instances of child labour due to their age. There is no one to care for them at home and therefore a high chance exists for them to succumb to this way of life and earn income. There is no doubt that such children are being subjected to injury that might result in permanent disability. The presence of young girl children reflects some of the social injustices faced by the girl child. One questions the social responsibility of the local leaders, parents and caretakers in the realisation of children's rights. The finding is also contradictory to that of Fraser (2010:32) of recognising children as human beings present in society who are entitled to rights as highlighted in Chapter 4, subsection 4.2.6, and Maia and Cal (2014:63) in sub-section 4.5.



**Source:** *(Author, 2018)*

Another incidental finding revealed that during the plant, rainy and harvest seasons, school attendance is low in the sub-region. A number of children periodically drop out of school and

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[49] FG1, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District

return during the dry season at the beginning of the year. Despite this finding, none of the children in this study was among this category.

### 7.4.3 Solidarity Mechanisms for promoting social justice for children with physical disabilities in working situations

The findings revealed absence of solidarity groups which makes it challenging to achieve cooperation as put forward by Rawls (2004:1) in Chapter Four. There are no solidarity groups among parents and caretakers possibly because they are not aware of the existing laws and policies that would be a basis for doing so.  No groups specifically organised purposely for social justice are in existence. In her own voice, one participant said:

*"We have never been involved in any actions related to promoting equality and fairness for our children with disabilities and we have never heard that they exist anywhere in our local community except the Universal Primary and Secondary Education programmes that children must be involved"*[50]

### 7.4.4 Information sharing on Rights and Resources for children with disabilities in working situations.

There was lack of information on rights of children, including those with disabilities. Children and caretakers had never attended any community event on rights and opportunities to access resources specifically in connection to disability. However, this does not imply that such services have never reached the region. Instead, it could be that the study participants of Nwoya in particular have never benefited given that they are based in a district that was newly created a few years ago as detailed in Chapter One, sub-section 1.4.1

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[50] FGI 8, Participant of Nwoya District

## 7.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the general findings and the constitutional environment in Uganda as related to the realisation of rights and has given us a sense of social justice as it is contextually understood in post-war northern Uganda. From the above findings, it is evident that the social justice approach seems not to be streamlined to benefit everybody in the Acholi sub-region. The western social justice system is being confused with the traditional justice system of Acholi yet the two would be complementary in enhancing social justice to not only benefit children with disabilities but the entire community. Therefore, any impact of the social justice system on hazardous child labour is limited as implementation seems to have become weak given the current cash economy where people believe in children's work as part of the contribution for family survival. The rights-based approach in Acholi is very much wanting in terms of social justice to children, especially those with disabilities.
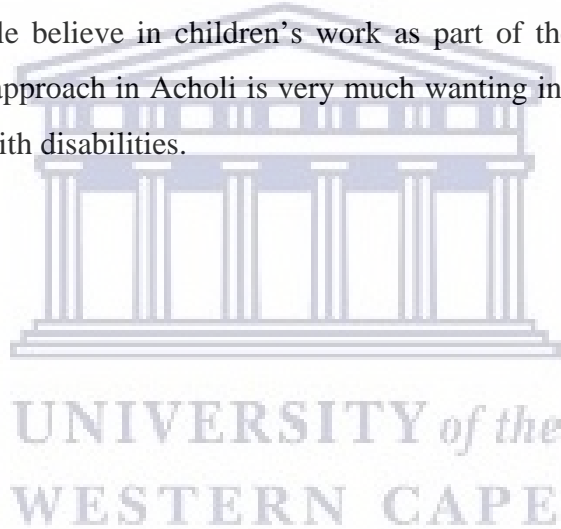
# CHAPTER EIGHT

# PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL RESULTS,

# ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION- PART 2-WELL-BEING

## 8.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter discusses each of the four research questions related to the well-being approach namely: a) What is the nature of gender relations in the study area? Attention here is paid to specific components of this research question that relate to well-being only. b) What is the relationship between hazardous child labour and disability in this post-war context of northern Uganda? c) How is the well-being of children with physical disabilities that are in hazardous labour in a post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda? and d) What are the perceived links between gender, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war Acholi Sub-region of northern Uganda?

It should be noted that this chapter is a continuation on presentation of findings specifically on the well-being approach. A qualitative study design was used with a purposive sample of eight (8) child participants in order to do an in-depth analysis of the findings discussed in this chapter.

## 8.2 The nature of gender relations in households of working children with disabilities in post-war Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda

The purpose of this investigation is clearly highlighted in Chapter Seven under sub-section 7.3. The analysis generally incorporates the pre-war and war periods to give a broader picture of the experiences of study participants and how it links to the present post-war era during which the study is being conducted. This chapter begins with exploring the findings on gender relations in the traditional Acholi culture.

### 8.2.1 Gender relations in the Traditional Acholi Culture

As in different cultures everywhere in Uganda, Acholi people have traditional norms and values. These values have informed their way of life and the ways that the different genders relate to one another in society and from one generation to another. It is therefore worth understanding this in terms of decision-making, resource allocation and utilisation, as well as roles and responsibilities that are key aspects of gender relations in households. This is a new contribution

by the study that relates to gender relations and well-being. In their own voices, study participants informed the researcher about the situation during the pre-war period.

***Box 5: Below is a reflection of voices of participants on decision-making during the pre-war period***

> *''In our Acholi dialect, we often say "Mon aye gwoko gang"to mean that women and girls are caretakers of homes whereas men and boys are the heads of the household and in another way, "Coo aye wegi gang" to mean that women and girls must listen and be obedient to men and boys unconditionally*[51].
>
> *"The elders ensured that as men interacted with their wives in the house, wife battering was considered a taboo. We have a song "Tek ango ma woko ikum mon! Mon ma giwilo awila ki lim. Abin awing ki Kitgum, Cwara wek Lworo ba! Wek Lworo Obedi"! The song cautions men not to beat us women and wonders the kind of strength a man may apply in beating his wife that he paid dowry for. Cautions a man to stop fearing and instead go to Kitgum district and fight with fellow men. Men who quarreled with their wives would be disciplined by their brothers because Acholi culture considers a woman as a mother of the clan that is not supposed to be beaten"*[52].
>
> *"In the pre-war period, irrespective of age, any unmarried man was not allowed to make any decisions before the elders neither could he get any leadership responsibility at community level*[53].

In summary, it was the role of men and boys to take decisions as women and girls were obliged to remain obedient, listen and take action as instructed. The role of elders in decision making is observed where they ensured control of what happened in families. This is similar to the modern political economy where decision making is majorly a sphere of the key agents of society and their relationship with others.

***Box 6: Voices of participants on resource allocation and utilisation during the pre-war period***

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[51] FGI 2, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[52] FGI 1, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[53]FGI 2, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

*"During the pre-war, as men we were economically powerful. We utilised the land to cultivate and sold produce. We also kept cattle and other livestock which were a source of income and we managed to take care of our families. However, a number of us resorted to unconstructive activities during the war such as consuming alcohol, playing cards for leisure and other forms of gambling. Providing for our families became difficult without resources. How painful it was to turn to depending on humanitarian assistance for basic necessities such as food relief"[54].*

*"It was not allowed for any man to subject a woman to hard work. Instead, men built houses and were the breadwinners in households. One was not considered as a man in case food was not in abundance in a household. There was no leadership responsibility given to such a man in a community if he could not provide food for his household members'[55].*

*The findings show that during the pre-war period, there was a communal approach to resource allocation, utilization as well as roles was the driving force. Children were taken care of collectively through specialized roles when at home or school. The elderly members had the capacity to take care of children including the extended family members. For instance, it was not surprising to find ten (10) families sharing a livelihood, eating together, earning a livelihood without subjecting children to hard and dangerous labour. Families had livestock in form of cattle, goats, sheep, and poultry as assets that generated income such as pairs of oxen plough. Communal work made it easy for people to earn a living. Children enjoyed their rights in a resourcefulness environment amid human, physical and financial resources. Children also stayed together and shared resources that belonged to different households such as fruits and vegetables which were readily available almost in all homesteads and it was hard finding children attacked by diseases as a result of lack of vitamins and minerals. Families shared accommodation and had enough space"[56].*

*"Men owned the major resources like land for cultivation of crops such as cotton, millet, sorghum, pigeon peas, cassava, potatoes and livestock. Men and boys, went hunting and engaged in crop-growing. This was majorly primary production and extraction without value addition"[57].*

*"We believe in our culture that a man quarreling with a wife during the rainy season could cause hailgravels to destroy crops. A cleansing ritual would be performed if one quarreled with a wife during the rainy season. We would do a last ritual referred to as 'Matoput' where such a*

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[54] FGI 2, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[55] FGI 1, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District, 12.9.2018

[56] FGI 4,5&6 Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District, 12.9.2018

[57] FGI 2,&8 Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya, District

> *man consumes soup of a bitter plant called 'matoput' for cleansing purposes. So, life was based on peace*[58]*"*

In summary, the findings reveal that men had the liberty to own all major resources such as land without any female involvement. Culturally, the difficult, tiresome and hard work were meant for men who were the bread winners. In addition, a communal approach to resource allocation and utilisation was part of the culture in families. Interestingly, any bad act diverting from cultural norms would result in the destruction of resources and thus rituals had to be performed to prevent such re-occurrences. Justice and fairness were reflected in the sharing of resources among children and their families. Families made sure that the children shared resources collectively. This was essential in avoiding conflict and problems that would arise between children and their families. However, the cultural practices also allowed for this by means of cleansing rituals. The finding regarding male ownership of resources such as land is consistent to that of Bakuluki et al. (2013:92), who assert that ownership of property is mainly patrilineal in an African setting. What is puzzling about these results is that hazardous child labour seems not to have existed and no pronounced gender inequalities existed in the communities. The communal utilisation of resources has a positive impact in society as people work together. In the current political economy, ownership of resources is dependent on how the economic system functions and the distinctiveness of ownership structures. The communal way of relating, working and sharing is a better approach, not only for promoting social justice, but also to ensure the well-being of children that relates to having trust in others and being hopeful of what the future holds. This enhances the ability to cope in a changing environment by way of thinking and making positive decisions while applying knowledge and skills to life challenges. With these aspects in mind, the researcher explores the aspects of roles and responsibilities during the pre-war period.

### 8.2.2 Gender relations during and after the Armed Conflict years in Acholi

The narratives of study participants reveal that the onset of the armed conflict confused the family setting. Women and girls suffered more consequences as they were displaced and scattered differently in Internally People's Displaced Camps. Moreover, resources were inadequate in a

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[58] FGI 5&6  Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

camp setting. They suffered war traumas of displacement that lead to trauma within gender relations. They also lost many family members, while others got abducted and are still missing today. This resulted in a lower level of well-being and manifested in more support seeking behaviour that placed women and girls in a position to experience sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In addition, some men are said to have separated men and women and because many men could not find work, they feared to return to their families in a camp setting. They felt too ashamed to face their families because they had no work. These findings were common across the sixteen (16) focus group interviews. It is important to remember that the disruption and violence marked the end of the communal approach in Acholi communities. This resulted in an individualistic approach where people turned to self-care without being bothered about the ability of others to survive and thrive in society. It should be noted that the circumstances created by war such as the passing of wives and husbands, abduction of people, including children, looting of property, and the disintegrated communities affected men and women differently. It resulted in conditions such as poverty and an increase in female-headed households. There is a remarkable increase in numbers of widows, widowers and single parents burdened with the care of children, especially those with disabilities.

In relation to decision making, similar to the pre-war period, it was a common finding of this research that strong and rigid cultural beliefs and practices exist, such as considering men and boys in households as superior in decision making, and thereby creating a power imbalance as men are charged with the responsibility to take decisions. Women and girls are treated as subjects and become subordinates who are supposed to listen and follow. These findings were common in thirteen (13) out of sixteen (16) FGIs of children and in all sixteen (16) FGIs of parents and caretakers across the study area. Each group was composed of five people (male and female). The practice was also noted to be very widespread in households where men are breadwinners. To make matters worse, neither the girls nor boys with physical disabilities mentioned any level of involvement in any decision making. This finding is contrary to the ideal of the ILO (2017: 22), Sullivan (2011:2) and Altma (2001) that considers children with disabilities as being experts on their own needs and requirements, as discussed in sub-section 3 of Chapter Four. It also affirms the political nature of decision making whereby authority and power take the lead in informing economic choices. The voices of the children and parents/caretakers are in Box 7 and 8 respectively:

**Box 7:** *The voices of child participants on decision making during the post-war period*

*"I was sent by my uncle to go to work at the rice farm because there was no money for me to go to school since we were seven at home. My uncle is the one who knew someone at the rice farm and he accepted that I go. Now I live here and my uncle comes to check whether they have paid and he takes the money home"*[59].

*"My mother died three years ago and I went to live with our family friends. They also have many children and when they took me, I lived home for 7 months doing nothing. I decided to work to get money to buy sandals and I found myself stay up to now. I have spent two years crushing gravels"*[60].

*"Some of our guardians with physical disabilities and cannot provide for our basic needs. Others are elderly and we instead have to provide for them. Those that are not in those categories do not have money to give us what we need. Hmm, one cannot just stay, we had to take decisions together with our caretakers and look for work individually. Each of us was accepted differently and we met here. We are now friends working together slowly by slowly and we are happy when we get some money"*[61].

**Box 8:** *The voices of parents/caretakers on the decision-making situation during the armed conflict and post war*

*"In certain circumstances a number of us women conceived through the once-off sex during the war and lived as single parents. This gave us the mandate to make our own decision"*[62].

*"During the war period, many girls started to live on their own because of the break-down of family structures. They could easily get employed as child labourers. Consequently, such girls made own decisions as they lived away and alone or with sisters and brothers. This was not exclusive of us children with disabilities because we also had to survive. This is pointed at as a major turning point in our lives as girls and women in terms of making our own decisions. Also in Acholi we have a strong belief that one's home is his/her house. Any mother that takes care of the boy children cannot allow them to take decisions anymore when she is the breadwinner"* [63].

*"A number of our children with disabilities had sponsors and foster parents that listened and took decisions on our behalf especially during the war period. These became more authoritative compared to us parents. Some of our children who were sponsored in school got a chance to join*

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[59] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya 16.9.2018

[60] FGI 4, Child participant, Gulu 15.9.2018

[61] FGI 7, Child participants Nwoya 16.9.2018

[62] FGI 7, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya district, 18.9.2018

[63] FGI 1, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu 16.9.2018

*secondary schools. These started questioning us parents on various issues as they got more consciuos on their situation. However, those who were not sponsored had to find work to get money and food items. So, these mainly live near or at their work sites. Their employers take most of the day-to-day decisions"[64]. "My husband has to decide on whether children go to school or they remain behind and do stone quarrying for us to get some money for food. He cannot allow children to go when there is no food in the house. They instead have to go to work and get some pay to help us in the house and may even miss a full term if the situation is so bad"[65].*

*"Today, due to high poverty levels brought about by the war, very few people can afford physical and financial resources to pay dowry and so remain unable to take decisions''[66].*

*"During this post-war era, we have started rebuilding nuclear families because we are more organised after the war with confidence in family stability. Clan meetings are being held and cultural and religious leaders are taking on their roles accentuating to people social values such as marriage. We are likely to regain our decision-making power only if we can do proper negotiation with our wives[67]"*

From the above voices and from the voices of other scholars, it can be implied that in the Acholi culture, the decision-making powers are largely in the hands of men. This is no different from many cultures in the Ugandan setting such as the "Ganda" and "Basoga" tribes. However, the findings turn out to be unique and disempowering as some boy children in female-headed households get consulted while girls remain passive. Continuation of grooming of boys is regarded as being more important and a patriarchal society is perpetuated. It is interesting to find out about the state of the financial resources and that boys are still a major determining factor in decision-making in which the whole process depends largely on whether the breadwinner is male or female. It is possible that results of this nature are limited to only female-headed households where women are bread winners.

Figure 8 below illustrates how gender relations are influenced by cultural beliefs and practices that favour men and thus the roles and responsibilities are determined accordingly.

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[64] FDI 3, Parents and Guardians of Gulu District, 2018.

[65] FGI 5, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu district, 14.9.2018

[66]  FGI 7& 8, Participant , Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District, 2018

[67] FGI 5 ,Participant, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District, 2018

Ideally, this would be the case since the values, beliefs and knowledge in Acholi culture, like in many other cultures are learned, shared and passed on from generation to generation.

*Figure 8: Reflecting gender relations and its influencing factors*
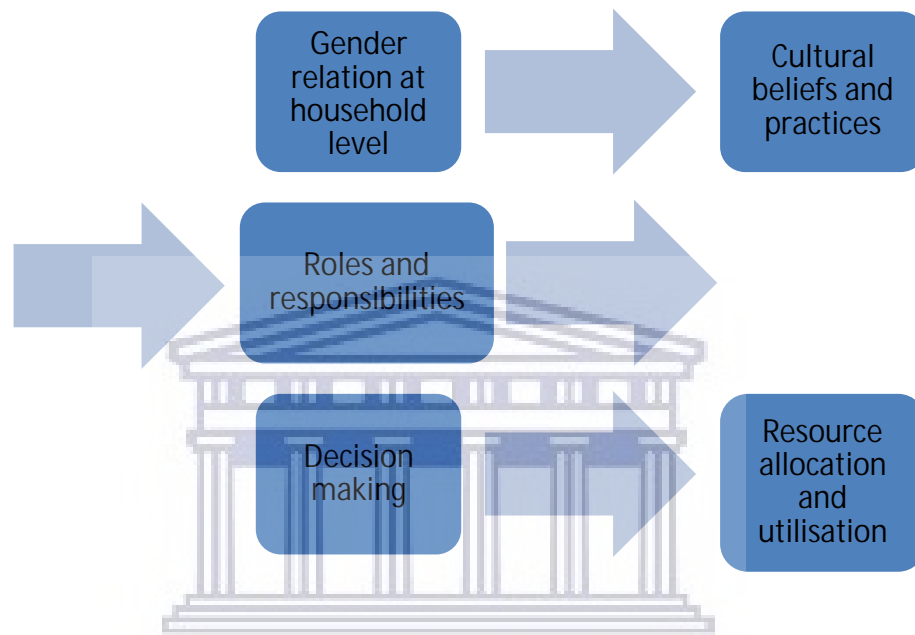


**Source: Author, 2020**

The illustration above indicates that resource allocation is a result of decision making, which is a result of roles plus responsibilities, emanating from cultural beliefs and practices, resulting from gender relations at a household level. For instance, the allocation of major resources such as land to men and boys only stems from the cultural norms and values. The Acholi culture attaches more value to boys as they grow up and carry on with the lineage whereby land as resource remains the property of their clan. Meanwhile, girls can only access and utilise land without having individual ownership. The justification for this is that girls marry and go off to benefit the family of their husbands. In order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment for all to benefit, there is no doubt that such barriers must be addressed. In a similar manner, the division of roles and responsibilities between the different genders depends on cultural norms and beliefs. Masculine and feminine roles are therefore determined and dependent on Acholi culture. When

well-positioned men and boys are in the Acholi culture/patriarchal society, the decision-making powers continue to be vested in them. These and many other factors place men as priority beneficiaries when it comes to the post- war environment where resources are scarce.

In addition, child participants also explain on page 158 that they were sent to go to work for pay by their caretakers due to inadequate financial and material resources for family survival. In this way children have to make some kind of contribution to the welfare of the family. Other findings reveal that some of the children that previously lived with parents and caretakers were sent to work. They currently have accommodation provided by their employers who take most of the day-to-day decisions on behalf of children. This finding is similar to that of Bojer (2000:29) that questions whether the choices made for these children reflect social justice for them. Enjoying the fruits of children's labour and preventing them from making their own choices deprive them from exercising this right. This is an unexpected finding that renders children more vulnerable as their decision making is also incapacitated. It stems from western influence yet the root structures of society supports traditional patriarchy that in turn has several consequences such as submissiveness of women that adds to inequality divides in society. Women and girl children, especially those with disabilities, are perceived as only hands to work but not perceived as people with views and rights to enjoy.

This study somewhat confirms that decision making at household level is linked to hazardous child labour. This form of shift/ dynamism in decision making is contrary to the cultural rigidities identified across the responses. It is an interesting finding that cannot be underestimated given the need to sustain gender equality and the well-being of children with disabilities. These important issues could be earmarked for future research and will be scrutinised in Chapter Eight. The end of this discussion leads to the next theme of resource allocation and utilisation in households of children with physical disabilities. Please see box 9a.

**Box 9** *a: Resource allocation and utilisation during the war period*

> *"Agricultural production significantly reduced during the war. The land became almost un utilised because crop and animal production activities ceased. Some of the livestock were raided as soon as the war started while others were sold by the natives.* Men could not sustain large families and therefore practices such as polygamy reduced. *Other people migrated leaving behind children without care. A number of children got abducted and taken to the bush to fight and the lucky ones who survived returned from the bush without families and lacked start-up assistance. Child-headed households became very common in the sub-region with increased child mothers giving birth to unwanted children"*[68].
>
> *"HIV/Aids spread like bush fire lowering the life expectancy to about 40 years. The numbers of orphans and vulnerable children in orphan-headed households increased with property left behind by their deceased parents being grabbed by the relatives. In addition, prostitution was rampant in search for financial resources. Army men took advantage of women and girls who needed money and protection from the soldiers and other men. "The war made it easy to access women and girls for sex without heavy expenditure and use the money for another basic need"*.[69]
>
> *"This created an in-kind economy into cash economy and rampant crime arose given the need to survive. A number of children flocked streets and got engaged in robbery in major surrounding towns. The originally self-employed people in own agricultural gardens turned out jobless thus increased poverty, anger, hunger, breakaway of marriages, separation of parents and their children resulting into a rise in hazardous child lab our*[70]*".*

In summary, the key issues pointed out in Box 9a include the many unwanted children that were a result of rape[71] and defilement during the war, increased numbers of orphans due to war killings and HIV/Aids, and separation of parents among others. There is no doubt that these are some of the historical driving factors towards hazardous child labour for the current generation of children amid the scarcity of resources. The life experienced by the previous generation of parents during the war is an indicator of some of the fruits of today. These findings match those of Save

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[68] FGI 16, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya district, 17.9.2019

[69] FGI 1, Parent and Caretaker of Nwoya district, 2018

[70] FGI 3, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya district, 17.9.2019

[71] FGI 4, children, Nwoya district

the Children (2018:8), where children are born and mature during and after armed conflict adding to their vulnerability in life. It can be concluded that had it not been for the war and the circumstances around the war, children with disabilities would possibly not have experienced the added vulnerability through engagement in hazardous child labour. Some of the findings in Box 9 b also match those obtained by Mehus et al. (2018: 10) and Mervyn (2013:156) who affirm that people are robbed of animal wealth during war and eventually get stuck into poverty. Now the researcher shifts attention to the current post-war period.

**Box 9** *b: Reflection of resource allocation and utilisation during the current post-war* without *compromising the life-giving aspects of the Acholi culture period*

> *"Today, we are settled back in our homes trying to engage in some productive activities. However, most of our Acholi land is being utilised through heavy crop production given the presence of many multi-national companies such as Amathion, Neo-Agric, Oola-Olilim for Cassava production, the farm for rice production in Nwoya, the Lungulu Co-operative Union for cotton production, a few to mention. Ranches have been established for cotton production such as one that belongs to some one of a Brigadier rank specialised in Matooke and fruit firms for mangoes and oranges for citrus production, the Delight farm for pineapples, sugar cane as well as maize production at St. Jude with over 1000 acres located in Nwoya District. Half of Nwoya is a game park with wild-life and forest cover. Gulu district has many cattle ranches such as Parloo and also Awac for heavy Rice production located in Paboo sub-county[72]".*
>
> *"By culture resources such as cattle are given to boys while girls get convinced that their brothers will take care of them. The Acholi saying "is often used to mean that one's brother should take care of her because it is his house where her dowry is given by the family for him to marry a wife. Boys are given the dowry when girls get married off. This dowry is in return used by the boy (brother of the girl) to marry a wife (takes it as dowry too). Even when a girl gets married and comes to visit her mother, she is always told that her brother's home is her home. This also applies to girls who get married and quit. Some of them quit with their children and return to their brothers' home. It is his responsibility to apportion land for the sister so she can dig and provide for her children. When a girl gets married and all goes well with her marriage, the husband's side benefits most. Therefore, there is no need for allocation of resources to girls. The practice to date is that essential resources such as land and money to buy goats and cattle are allocated*

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[72] FGI 3, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya district, 17.9.2019

*only to the boys while girls are given perishables and other necessities in form of clothes[73]".*

From the voices of the study participants, the presence of many firms and foreign companies mainly in connection to agriculture and other activities is evident. They were introduced after the war by mainly foreign individuals with Indians being the majority of those owning farms. A possible explanation for this might be the readily available market for their activities and increased global policy attention to improve nutrition in the recent past. This intriguing finding could also be due to the current relative peace being experienced in the sub-region. There is also no doubt that these institutions tap into the locally available resources, including raw materials and available labour. The likelihood of increases in hazardous child labour compared to what is visible today is therefore high, especially as these institutions expand and increase in number. In this way global capitalism had entered the northern Uganda region after the war when the traditional economy had collapsed. After two decades of warfare and socio-economic disintegration, both society and its economy had virtually collapsed. Into this scenario entered some new players: ex-military and current military men and politicians such as Major General Otema Awany who was, in 2018, accused of land grabbing in the Got Apwoyo and Purongo sub-counties in Nwoya District. This officer also engaged in the violent eviction of over 6000 families. Companies developed cash crops and export enterprises that removed the traditional ways in which families were able to subsist. Consequently, people had to become labourers and the poorest and weakest had to do the hardest and least popular work. Today, children with disabilities are engaged in stone bashing, petty trade at night and sand mining, among others.

The findings also reveal that historically poor practices of resource allocation have prevailed due to traditional gender expectations. Boys and men are more favoured in Acholi compared to girls and women, leading to the current trend of men being financially autonomous. This undoubtedly seems to be a contributing factor to the larger numbers of girls in hazardous child labour compared to their male counterparts, as indicated in figure 5 in Chapter Seven.

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[73] FGI 1, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District, 12.9.2019

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that at household level, men and boys own almost every asset including land, and it is unfortunate that some of them treat their wives and girl children as property because of dowry matters. This cultural practice perpetuates violence against women and girls in Acholi. Women and girls surprisingly agree that as part of their local culture, men are socially superior and any man has the right to aver power over them. Moreover, there were no observable major signs of women and girls in Acholi expressing support for women's and girls' rights. This perception is common across many tribes in Uganda and in sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 specifically points to gender equality and singles out the empowerment of women and girls.

The fact that Acholi people were accustomed to being given handouts during armed conflict period (see Box 9 b) that does not exist in the current era, may partly explain why hazardous child labour has become an immediate alternative for family survival. Today the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that children with disabilities are also involved in hazardous child labour. The cycle may continue unless particular action is taken to arrest the situation.

**Box 10:** *Reflecting Roles and Responsibilities of study participants during the war and post-war period*

> *"Most of us as women sold some items in the market during the war such as tomatoes; a kind of job that many men could not do because they felt belittled to do such work since they were already used to doing more profitable work such as utilising land during the pre-war era. We still do this kind of work and the men are in crop cultivation[74].*
>
> *"Our parents keep telling us the difficult life they went through during the war and how hard they worked to survive. This is a motivation to us today. We sometimes help with some work at home such as washing utensils, cleaning the compound and collecting water before reporting to the farm but it requires waking up very early to catch up with the schedule"[75].*

The findings reveal that men became redundant during the war, and yet by culture, society expects them to provide for their families. Instead, women became economically active in order to provide for their families. This is an interesting finding in addition to that of Mehus et al. (2018: 4) who narrates how the switching of roles during the war renders women vulnerable as they try

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[74] FGI 4, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District, 17.9. 2018

[75] FGI 3, Child participants, Nwoya District, 17.9.2018

to provide for their families. These two aspects are part of the transition in the contemporary world today. This finding however also affirms how women and girls get burdened with the many responsibilities in their day-to-day life. However, when calculated in monetary terms, women and girls' work is such a huge contribution to society that need to be recognised in terms of the Gross Domestic Product. Therefore, the relations between women and girls' war experiences, cultural and financial issues are multidimensional in nature though not easily transferable.

**8.3 The relationship between Child Labour and Disability in Acholi**

The purpose of this objective was to explore whether there is any link between hazardous child labour and disability in the post-war context of northern Uganda. In order to put this into context, the study explored the pre-war and war background to provide a full picture of the investigation. The link between the two themes was explored in terms of the factors that influence children with physical disabilities involved in hazardous labour, how they acquired the form/s of disabilities as well as their experiences on the job, including forms of payment. It should be noted that none of the child participants interviewed had a formal working relationship with their employers. None has a formal signed contract. Their voices are captured and reflected under each of the subsequent sub-themes.

**8.3.1 Factors influencing children with physical disabilities into hazardous child labour**

The following responses in Box 11a were scrutinised from child participants' FGI stories, regarding the responsible factors driving children with physical disabilities into harzadeous labour. A brief summary underneath the boxes reflects the author's understanding of the connection between the different dimensions.

**Box 11***a: Factors influencing children into hazardous labour*

1. *"I used to remain home yet my sister could go to school. I felt that I am not treated like her. She is a first-class citizen and I am in second class and I still feel pain. I have to work for myself"*[76].
2. *"I wanted to buy sandals for myself because my left foot felt uncomfortable being pressed by small gravels when walking to go to church"*[77]
3. *"My Auntie used to constantly say that I am a child with bad luck and misfortune like I am nothing and useless. One day, I was made to walk over 25 kilometers to a big tree on a hill in order to perform a ritual. I got too tired yet my sisters did not go because they have no disability. I even got nothing in return, so I have to work for myself"*[78].
4. *"I wanted to engage in stone quarrying so that I get money and go back to school after my father's death. I found myself staying here longer because I later thought that I need to save money and get self-employment"*[79].
5. *"If you work in Acholi culture you are respected. So, I wanted to get respect after being despised because of my lame leg and also enjoy the fruits of my sweat"*[80].
6. *"I felt that I am forgotten because I was not benefiting from the humanitarian support given to some of the children with disabilities at our village. I decided to come and work here to provide for myself the things I need"*[81].
7. *"I came to work at the farm here because I lacked some necessities and my fingers can still be useful in working. My fellow children at home were each given a piece of land but for me I never got because my Uncle thought I cannot manage to work. So, I have no land and I must work to earn and buy for myself land"*[82].
8. *"It is an opportunity for me to work in this cash economy so that I am able to acquire my own property since I have no parents to provide for me like other children that I see"*[83].
9. *"I was introduced to this work by my three friends who were already working at the rice farm. My sister too went to work in Gulu town and she is taken every evening to sit with her basket of bananas and sell in Gulu Bus Park. So, we both want to earn and meet our present and future needs"*[84].
10. *"Every time I asked my grandmother for smearing oil or anything else, she could shout loudly in our Acholi dialect "ngat ma tiyo neon toke mit" meaning that he/she who works is good to look at. I had to go to work in order to be useful in our home"*[85].

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[76] FGI 10, Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[77] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[78] FGI 8, Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[79] FGI 9 Child Participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[80] FGI 2, Child participants, Gulu District 13.9.2018

[81] FGI 5, Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[82] FGI 2, Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[83] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[84] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[85] FGI 2, Child participants, Gulu District12.9.2018

> 11. *"In our Acholi language, there is a saying "Ngwiny Cet Kwiya goro" meaning that even children with disabilities eat and so they have to work. It extends to mean that in order to excrete waste products in the pit latrine, one has to first consume food and before s/he eats, s/he must have worked because there is nothing for free. This brings pain whenever I think about it. The only solution was to get myself to work and avoid depending on others that see me as a burden[86]".*
>
> 12. *"It is mandatory for us children to go and work with our mothers and caretakers in stone quarrying irrespective of physical condition unless one is hospitalised or quite ill. We boys dig out rocks from the tunnels deep underground. Although sometimes accidents happen, we have been lucky that we use rudimentary tools without any protective gears and still survive. Although most of us boys come to the stone quarry by age 10, age seven in considered normal by our community for us to work. Today, majority of us here are aged between 10-1. This place is our means for survival. Most of our parents say they started working in this same stone quarrying place between age 6-7 (now over 40 years) thus this is the place that has sustained our families[87]*
>
> 13. *"It is our work as children to ferry the gravels from the quarry and, bang them into the right sizes as may be required by the customers. The men have to remove heaps and heaps of soil about five meters deep before they reach the gravels for uprooting. Sometimes, widows and women without husbands also find themselves removing huge gravels from underground which is a more rigorous and hectic activity. As a boy child, I need to be close to my mother and offer my support.*

The link between disability and hazardous child labour continues to surface in the above narratives of child participants and the parents and caretakers through this sub-section. The findings reveal that children with physical disabilities are influenced to work by the family environment. In summary, children's voices point to the need to gain social status, earning to meet their basic needs and trying to pay their own school fees in the future, besides their contribution to putting food on the family table being mandatory.

The finding related to proverbs used to refer to the children with disabilities is similar to the reviewed literature in Chapter Four when consulting Altai (2004) and UNICEF (2014), affirming that children with disabilities are disempowered through being called names related to the type of disabilities visible on their bodies. This is unfair to children given that it violates their rights and freedom with high chances of compromising their well-being. It also prevents children with disabilities from freely associating with fellow children and people in society. Moreover, these findings seem similar to the factors that influence their able-bodied counterparts to engage

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[86] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya 16.9.2018

[87] FGI 3, Child participant, Gulu District 12.09.2018

in hazardous labour for pay. These findings contribute to the scarcity of information about the relationship between disability and hazardous child labour. It is also affirmed as difficult concepts to investigate (ILO, 2011:3) in Chapter Four.

**Box 11b:** *Reflection of the voices of parents and caretakers on some of the influencing factors for children to engage in hazardous labour*

> *"Most of us started working in this stone quarry long before the war when our parents introduced us to the work. Later, the war interrupted but we had to return to fend for the survival of our children and families at large soon after the camps were dissolved. This is where our grandparents worked to be able to put food on table. It is normal that our parents trained us to do the same work and we have successfully introduced our children to the same. It makes us happy when we see that despite the challenges such as lack of school scholastic materials, our children have a source of income to turn to. Their families will continue to survive here too for a longer period like ours have done. Some of us also have gardens and it is our practice to do garden work with children till around 9:00am before we come to uproot and bang the gravels. Children that get injuries that result into permanent disabilities are not the first ones, some of their ancestors suffered from the same too including some of us. [88].*

Again, the link between disability and hazardous child labour surfaces from the voices of parents and caretakers. These voices affirm that ancestors earned a livelihood at these sites for their families for generations. Today, children work following the example of their ancestors thus implying a cultural implication in connection to their well-being, coupled with a likelihood of acquiring multiple disabilities. This finding suggests a relationship between hazardous child labour and disability, as Abdallah et.al (2018:23) has established and this link is elucidated in Chapter Four. It also reveals a long practice in history where generations of people in the area have benefited from workplaces such as stone quarrying long before the war period. This possibly occurred with the involvement of more girls with physical disabilities and is affirmed in Table 2 in Chapter 7, sub-section 7.4.1.

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[88] FGI 1, Parent/caretaker, Gulu District 12.9.2018

*A photograph reflecting more girls involved in hazardous labour at the stone quarry site in Laroo than their male counterparts*



***Source****: Author, 2018*

There were other girls without any forms of disabilities present at the stone quarry site but who were not part of the photograph that was taken after the formal FGIs.

This subject leads us to explore the voices of children in relation to their various forms of disabilities and how it has surfaced.

**Box 12:** *Reflects voices of child participants narrating how some of them acquired the forms of physical disabilities.*

> *"My left leg was hurt by a huge stone that I was carrying and two of my toes were cut off at Lacor hospital. Also, last week, one girl was covered up by a heap of soil and died on spot. I thank God that for me, I did not die and I am still here working. Also, last month, one of our friends had one of his fingers on the right hand burnt as we lit the fire to soften the gravels before we could uproot them from the ground. It is also tiring to ferry the too much water from underground besides its risk to the young children that can drown"[89].*
>
> *"I hit my left hand finger with a small hammer in the year2015 and I lost it forever"[90]*
>
> *" I was hit by a hammer that was being used by my neighboring friend and I ended up losing the one toe"[91]*
>
> *"My grandmother tells me that I was born normal but the blinking of my eyes started when I was six months up to today. We went twice to see the doctor and we never had money to go back"[92]*
>
> *"People always say that my left hand stopped growing at age 8 because it is shorter and smaller than my right hand but I use both hands to do any job"[93]*
>
> *"I was born when my right leg is shorter than the left one. That is what mother tells me when I ask her what happened to me"[94]*
>
> *"I was born with missing ears as you can see but I hear because of this one hole in my right ear. Children used to laugh at me. I think now they are used to me because they do not laugh that much"[95]*
>
> *"My grandmother told me that I was born normal but at three years I started to be epileptic. She also added that my mother had the same problem and that it led to her death"[96].*

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[89] FGI 2, Child participants, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[90] FGI 2, Child participant, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[91] FGI 3, Child participant, Gulu District 13.9.2018

[92] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[93] FGI 4, Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[94] FGI 4, Child participant, Gulu District 17.9.2018

[95] FGI 4, Child participant, Gulu District 17.9.2018

[96] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya District 12.9.2018

The findings reveal that some children acquired their disabilities while working in hazardous labour, thus reflecting a relationship between the two. This finding is similar to that of ILO (2017). Other children were born with particular forms of physical disabilities. The researcher can generally infer from Abdallah et. al. (2018-24) that stipulate that children mainly acquire disabilities at places of employment. Hence, it could conceivably be hypothesised that children already with disabilities are rendered highly vulnerable by the environment. This however does not rule out Abdallah et.al (2018:23) findings that show a relationship between hazardous child labour and disability in low and middle income countries. These results may not be transferable though. Firms that do business in this globalised economy continue to encroach on hazardous child labour that is perceived as cheaper for profit actualisation, but children's contribution does not specifically show up in national and probably global figures.

**8.3.2 The experiences of children with physical disabilities while at work**
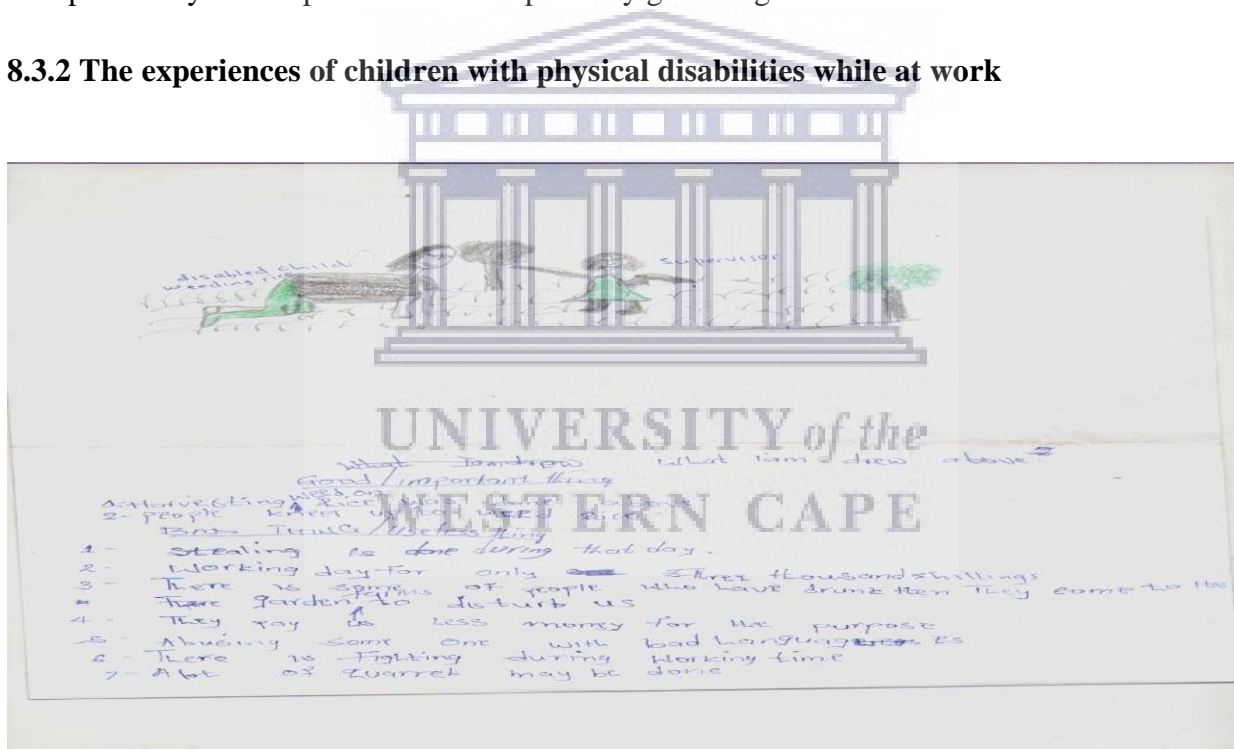


*Caption: Some of us are used and exploited while we provide labour at the agricultural farm*

From the draw and write exercise, the findings reveal the painful experiences of children in informal working situations reflected in the above illustration by a girl child.

**Box 13:** *The participant's voice is reflected in table below*

> "While at the rice farm, I earn as low as three thousand Uganda shillings per day (less than one US dollar per day) for the work that I do from around 7:40am to around 5:00pm. We only stop a bit for about an hour to have lunch. This money is indeed little for the work I do yet at times it is not even paid on time. The supervisor appreciates me for being trainable and my ability to catch up with tasks quickly, but she is very rude and I work too much. I sometimes suffer with no money till a time when it gets paid moreover in instalments. However, I am a bit happy compared to my friends who sometimes are paid in form of items like food or silver-fish, soap or sugar in return to for the work they have done"[97].

It can be concluded that employers set out for cheap labour thus exploiting children by not providing formal binding agreements as this would be contrary to the law.

**Box 14:** *Reflecting the outstanding voices of caretakers/parents on persistence of child-labour*

> "During the pre-war and war period, the then children experienced survival labour and children of today are experiencing actual hazardous child labour"[98].
>
> "Children easily get work in farms here because employers see that children's life span on job will be longer for example from 10 years for life. So, the retention rate for children, especially in farms located in Lunkungulu sub-county in Nwoya is higher than that of anyone else. Moreover, the demand for children in formal employment is very low because they do not have the required skills"[99]
>
> "Children are seen to have less responsibility at home. They can have all their meals at the work place, sleep there and therefore the social cost of such a child is very low putting the employer at great advantage besides the fact that employers prefer children for they are very flexible[100]".
>
> "Some of our children do not want to stay in rural areas because they feel that town life is much better and therefore one is better off in town working for survival"[101].

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[97] FGI 4, Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[98] FGI 3, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[99] FGI 1, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[100] FGI 2, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[101] FGI 1, Parents and Caretakers, Gulu District 12.9.2018

> *"We believe as caretakers that when a child is employed, it is part of career development and the burden of care on our side is reduced. We encounter high dependency ratios as a war consequence. For some of us, when children work, we earn half the money to meet the family basic needs"[102].*

In summary, the voices of parents and caretakers point to the life-span where children are recruited in informal jobs because they are expected to stay longer and are paid less given that they have less responsibility at home. This has psychological implications.

*Children selling to passengers in a bus (left) and others selling on the street (right) at Ceraleno, Gulu*
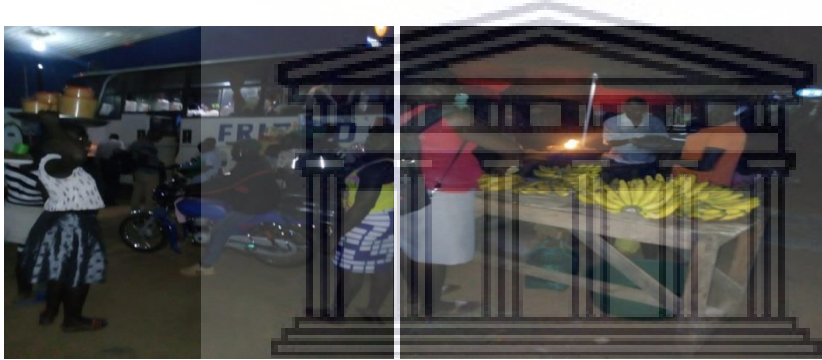


**Source:** *Author, 2018*

The findings reveal that children sell late in the evening and in the early hours of the night in search of money after having been involved in household chores all day. The findings are similar to those in section 4.2.2 of Chapter Four. Moreover, two of the girls are suffering from epilepsy and in case of an attack happening the risk of exposure to sexual exploitation may surface. This affirms remnants of hazardous child labour during a period when children were night commuters in northern Uganda during the war and questions their current opportunities to pursue their own dreams and goals.

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[102] FGI 2, Parents and Caretakers, Nwoya District

### 8.3.3 Form of payment to children with physical disabilities involved in hazardous labour in Acholi

The findings reveal that in the past, it was not acceptable to pay children for any work. Today, parents allow the already vulnerable children to work and they are either paid less or in kind amid challenging working environments.

Piece rate is the current acceptable form of payment in Acholi as opposed to time rate. That is, children are paid per piece of work done and referred to as *"Katara"* (*the standard piece of work done*). For instance, some children narrate how they are paid a sum of UGX 1,000 (*one thousand shillings*) per square meter of land cultivated; a standard rate which is paid to adults too. When paid in time rate, the findings reveal an amount ranging between Uganda shillings 3,000 (*three thousand*) to 4,000[103] (*four thousand*) per day. It applies to both small and large farms when one works full-time as opposed to casual labourers such as the children in this study.

In-kind payment was identified by participants as another acceptable form of payment, depending on one's needs. For instance, some children are paid in the form of items such as a given percentage of food and other basic needs like soap, sugar, and clothing, among other items. One's livelihood is considered as his or her payment and the employer will refer to it as free support. This finding reveals typical exploitation of children and compromises their personal and social well-being. It also implies that children are not empowered enough to bargain for reasonable payment equivalent to the labour offered and thus face unfair treatment.

All children interviewed have been paid in piece rate before and majority had earned a maximum of UGX 270,000[104] (*two hundred seventy thousand shillings*) in six months. This is additional to the in-kind payment they have received. All of the children expressed their disappointment with in-kind payment especially on their first encounter. This affirms that hazardous child labour is reflected at different production levels. The next item presents the voices of the children.

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[103] Slightly above 1 US dollar

[104] Equivalent to 75 US dollars

**Box 15**: *Selected voices of some of the child participants that are sometimes paid in-kind are reflected below.*

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*"Last month, four of us harvested a quarter acre of rice. It took us a period of two weeks. In return, each of us received one basin of the harvest much later. We then each sold the basin at a cost of five thousand shillings and decided to save the money for buying Christmas clothes when the time comes"[105].*

*"Three weeks ago, three of us opened land at the farm and heaped one quarter of an acre of sweet potatoes in 12 days. In return, a cock was slaughtered for us on the following Sunday, we ate and went back home. It was not easy to heap the potatoes because it had just rained once and the soil was hard but we managed. It was a very disappointing experience but we could do nothing about it"[106].*

*"It is always hard to find food, soap and sugar. So, when I come to the farm and there is no source at home, I get silver fish or sugar or soap depending on what we do not have at home"[107]*

*"I once joined with three children at the neighborhood to plant sim-sim at another farm. It took us eight days to do the work successfully. Although we did not negotiate, we were expecting payment in form of money but after finishing the work, we were informed that we have to be patient as we will get our pay after the harvest of what we have just planted. Two weeks back, the family invited us when they had prepared rice and goats meat that were cooked in a clay pot and smelling nice, then I ate and enjoyed that day. We were also each given a tin of sim-sim. This was "dira" in the Acholi dialect (in-kind form of payment received"[108].*

*"For several times, I have fallen sick with malaria, my boss has always taken me to hospital and by paying the medical bill, it is counted as my pay. So, whenever I get sick, I do not expect any other payment"[109]*

*"I remember six months ago when a family contracted two of us to work in the garden but we did not pay attention to discussing details regarding payment. After digging the agreed size of the garden, we were paid by being fed with food that was cooked in pots made out of clay with a nice taste and smell. In Acholi, this is expressed as **"Awaka"**. Children like me are happy to go to work and be served food to eat. It can only be termed as hazardous child*

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[105] FGI 1, Child participants, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[106] FGI 4. Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[107] Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[108] FGI 2, Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[109] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

> *labour when the food is not given on that very day but instead at a later date when my parents are invited to go to eat all the food on our behalf! In our culture, this is seen as one form of disciplining the child and it is considered as formal training for character formation"*[110]
>
> *"Because everyone says I am a beautiful girl, every Friday on a market day I do not come to work here at the stone quarrying site. My Auntie always sends me to sit in a market to sell local brew in a huge calabash that I attract customers. I serve little local brew to any prospective buyer to test and they decide whether to buy. However, some men keep around longer while leaking the calabash slowly as they talk to me launching their 'manifesto' before the actual buying"*[111].

These findings reveal anomalies such as children being paid less than the value of the job done forgetting that the demand and supply of hazardous child labour at local level. It is disappointing to note that children consider their work as hazardous only when one of them gets injured, but they do not see it as dangerous to their lives before such an incidence. Similarly, it is dehumanising to portray a child's beauty as one way of advertising and inviting customers to buy the local brew. These findings are contrary to those in Chapter Four where payment to hazardous child labour was in the form of money. However, these findings might not be transferable to post-war context given the different working environment and policies.

### 8.3.4 Perceptions of Acholi families and communities of children with disabilities in working situation

The study reveals negative and disempowering perceptions. Acholi families and communities refer to children with disabilities as "dead-alive" in an expression *"Dano ma Otto Lacungu"* meaning, they are less human. Children with disabilities are treated as a misfortune *("Kec kom")* meaning that they hinder prosperity. They are also believed to be a permanent burden to their families. These findings are similar to those documented by Braddock & Parish (2013:13) in Chapter Four under sub-section 4.2.3, affirming the traditional way of thinking about children with disabilities referring to the past when these children were regarded as a misfortune, curse and faced neglect and mistreatment. It is an extremely negative way of thinking and prompts people to act

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[110] FGI 1, Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

[111] FGI 3, Child participant, Gulu District  12.9.2018

accordingly. Caution is due here because when the Acholi society perceives children with physical disabilities in that way, there are likely to be incidents of injustice that could compromise their personal and social well-being.

Another finding reveals that children with disabilities are perceived to live with bitterness and can never appreciate anything. They are perceived as non-productive, useless and therefore not much loved, even when they struggle to work. Consequently, these children work to prove their worth by fending for themselves and contribute to meeting family needs.

Children with disabilities are treated delicately because they are perceived to be incapable of overcoming challenges on their own. Other families treat them as 'godly' and to be well taken care of in order to attract fortune, thereby increasing financial resources arising from their labour. It is also believed in Acholi that mistreating a disabled child comes with high chances of giving birth to children with physical disabilities. Additionally, sometimes these children are taken to be excellent performers in specific fields. For example, children with physical disabilities are believed to quick at reasoning while children with hearing impairment are believed to be very strong and can do a lot of manual work. This finding is similar to that of Abdalla et al. (2018:1), ILO IPEC (2006: 1), Bass (2004: 6) and Basu and Van (1998).

### 8.3.5 How children with physical disabilities perceive themselves

**Box 16**: *Children's voices regarding own perceptions are reflected below:*

*"Sometimes I regret why I was born because I have seen children that are not having any disability yet are given all they need"[112]. "I feel that people despise me and I want to work hard to show them that I am a valuable member of society"[113] "I want to show people that my being with a left lame hand does not equate to being worthless. I work hard to create wealth and make life easier for myself"[114]*

*"I am a human being and I want to enjoy life like any other children at home. This is why I work"[115] "I think I can be useful to my family. I want to go back to school after collecting enough money and I will become a teacher[116]". "I always feel low when with non-disabled*

[112] FGI 1 Child participant, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[113] FGI 3 Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

[114] FGI 2 Child participant, Gulu District 12.9.2018

[115] FGI 5Child participant, Gulu District 17.9.2018

[116] FGI 4 Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

> *children because they always want to annoy and despise me, while looking at me as a useless*
>
> *person until after a long time when they get used to me*[117].

From the above voices, it is evident that children with physical disabilities form their own perception in view of how others treat them. The benchmark seems to be based on how they think other people in the community are perceiving them. Their involvement in hazardous child labour seems to be a coping mechanism to show their communities that they can positively contribute to their own well-being and to family and society. Some of them seem to be committed to pursuing their goals, such as going back to school. It should also be noted from the above findings that most of these children seem to have a positive self-image because of their determination to acquire resources and meet their goals. The children seem to attach meaning to their hard work aimed at improving their lives and becoming more valuable members of their communities.

It can therefore be concluded from the above findings that there is a strong relationship between disability and hazardous child labour. It is not clear though whether the exploitation in form of payment has any connection to the fact that children are with disability or that their being already vulnerable with disability is implied to mean that they will have no alternative but to work for any pay and in any form.

## 8.4 The well-being of children with physical disabilities involved in hazardous child labour in a post-war Acholi.

The purpose of this exploration was to understand children's perspectives in terms of how they experience life in view of a holistic perspective. This was done based on a series of domains that are related to social, environmental and economic aspects. To be specific, the key well-being dimensions include food and nutrition, shelter/housing, health, security, social cohesion in community and attachment to own religious faith, among others. The selected domains discussed in the interview were already piloted and pre-tested on orphans and vulnerable children by the Senefeld et al. (2009) in Africa and in a post-war context in countries such as Rwanda (see Chapters Five and Six for details). The researcher begins with understanding participants' perspectives that agree with the definition of the concept of well-being.

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[117] FGI 6 Child participant, Nwoya District 16.9.2018

**Box 17:** *Participants' voices on their understanding of well-being*

> *"Well-being means experiencing love at home when I have access to food, shelter and clothing"*[118]
>
> *"Well-being is how society treats me. For example, giving me what I need in life so that I am also happy like other children"*[119].
>
> *"Well-being means that people at home are being mindful of my understanding ability as a child that I can also decide on what I need"*[120]
>
> *"There are things I like and others that I dislike and for me when they are considered, it means my well-being is ok"*[121].
>
> *"When I know that I have people that like me, listen to me and I share my problems with them, then I am well"*[122].
>
> *"Life was bad when I was kept inside the house and I could not be allowed to come out but whenever my Auntie visited, she could take me out and my leg healed"*[123]

The findings reveal that children describe and define well-being depending on their personal experience and how they are treated in their families and communities with a focus on emotional and personal well-being as Dalyot and Dalyot (2017) affirm in Chapter Four.

We now turn to an overview of findings in relation to each of the selected seven (7) universal well-being dimensions with data obtained from eight (8) selected girls and boys (refer to Table 3 - Appendix 2). The group consisted of more females than males due to the nature of female vulnerability in this context. The purpose is to deeply understand their well-being in a post-war context. These children are aged between 13-17 and are living with parents and care-takers that directly experienced trauma as a result of the two decade war in the northern Uganda region. These children may be indirectly experiencing similar kinds of trauma through interaction with their

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[118] FGI 1, Child participant, Gulu District

[119] Child participant 2, Gulu District

[120] Child participant 1, Nwoya District

[121] Child participant 3, Gulu District

[122] Child participant 2, Nwoya District

[123] Child participant 3, Nwoya District

parents and caretakers, and are partly responsible for determining their own well-being. In-depth interviews were conducted averaging between 45 minutes -1 hour in length. Child participants' demographic data were also collected. It is important to note that these children were part of the eighty (80) children that were involved in the whole study. Interviews were digitally recorded with permission from child participants and their caretakers. Notes were also taken by the interviewer. The interviews were transcribed and coded thematically. It should be noted that five (5) out of eight children (*F=4, M=1*) were first-borns in their families. However, being first-born was a coincidence and not part of the selection criteria for involvement in this study. One can conclude that physical disability in northern Uganda is common and more so among first-born children that have good representation in hazardous child labour. A possible explanation for the latter could be the urgent need for children in families to contribute to family survival. It is also possible that mothers had limited knowledge on viable feeding practices during pregnancy while the lack of safety equipment could have put children at higher risk of getting injured thus resulting in permanent disability.

Table 3 below provides an analysis of the well-being of eight (8) children whose interviews were digitally recorded with their permission and the permission of their caretakers. Notes were also taken by the interviewer. The interviews were transcribed and coded thematically according to the well-being domains in relation to each of the child participants. More details are indicated at the second sub-section of this chapter.

Table 3 is based on the work by McGregor et. al. (2015) on the assessment of well-being in developing country contexts. The authors base their model largely on that of the OECD (2011), but also incorporate dimensions from other prominent models. They recommend that well-being be assessed in terms of three main dimensions: material conditions, quality of life, including health, education, security and other human development dimensions, and thirdly, relationality. These three broad categories were applied to deepen the understanding of the well-being of research participants. As could be seen above, their recommendation to do this assessment in a participatory way was followed, by asking all research participants what their own idea of well-being is. The Table points to how the three key interest areas in this study, hazardous child labour, disability and gender have been influenced by the situation of the research participants in each geographic area, and for each of the three dimensions suggested by McGregor et. al., (2015). This table does not

give a comprehensive review of all research results, and should rather be seen as a summary of well-being findings within the conceptual framework suggested by McGregor et. al. (2015).

185

**Table 3: The well-being of eight children with physical disabilities and in harzadeous labour in Acholi-post war context**

| Name *(All names have been changed)* | Age | Sex | District | McGregor 2015:6, Adapted<br><br>Universal wellbeing dimensions | Material conditions | Lived life experiences | Relationality (economic, socio-cultural systems in post-war) | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Akullo | 15 | F | Nwoya | **Resources** | Eats two meals a day with mainly millet, cassava and green vegetables<br>Untimely meals<br>Access to free shelter at the rice farm<br>No costs incurred on her by own household but she supports them. | First-born child orphaned at age eight<br>Primary four school drop out<br><br>Able to read and write<br>Medical bills paid by self through earnings from labour | She has five male non-disabled siblings. She lives with three while two live separately with maternal extended family members. She participates in Catholic church youth activities | No balanced diet<br><br>Equality of opportunity to education missed |
|  |  |  |  | **Domains** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | **1. Hazardous child labour** | Four (4) years at rice farm, 5 days a week<br>Paid in kind for 2 year split period in items of food that is collected by her family member.<br>*Earned cash Ugx 1,623, 600 (USD, 451 equivalent) in the last 24 months*<br>*Supports her family members*<br>*Bought clothes, Vaseline and other essential for self.* | Socially secure<br>Feeling insecure psychologically and economically.<br>Seem not to have negotiation powers for pay of amount equivalent to work done.<br>Struggles with burnout | Works to contribute to meeting family and own needs | Orphaned girl child faced with some exploitation through in-kind payment<br>Feeling secure is a prerequisite to good health |
|  |  |  |  | **2. Disability** | Was born with a missing ear. Observed plates of food being pushed to her from a distance by relatives that appeared in fear. | Was hidden believed and considered a bad omen by the family members.<br>Community Sometimes very stressed. | Majority of the people believe she is possessed by the traditional evil spirit as a few others believe it is God's will that she lives with disability.<br>Kept indoors till this stopped at aged 7 when neighbours intervened<br>Found strengths within self and in church group. | Currently has supportive and friendly spaces |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | **3. Gender** | Adolescent girl out of school. Several household chores. Earn for her family. Not much control over resources such as family land and the little money earned No assets owned | Exposed to sexual and gender-based violence at the rice farm amid the low income earned. | Working hard and being obedient to culture | Communal support needed |
| Amono | 17 | F | Gulu | **Resources** | One meal a day. Majorly millet food and silver fish Shelter provided by family friends | Double orphaned girl & first- born in family Primary six school dropout  Able to read and write Medical bills paid by self using own earnings from labour. . | Lives with six other siblings in an extended family setting Not actively engaged in any community activities | Insufficient meals Prone to diseases due to lack of a balanced diet |
| | | | | **Domains** | | | | |
| | | | | **1. Hazardous child labour** | Six  6) years in stone quarry working 5 days a week  First-born and supports her family. *Untimely cash paid UGX 1,230,000 (one million two hundred thirty thousand) in 24 moths (USD 341 equivalent). Earned In-kind payment during the period (silver fish,  salt, soap) Bought Christmas clothes for self and family.* | Socially feels secure and economically insecure Feels angry putting blame on parents who are no more | Meets family and own needs to be valued and accepted Payment for work to be done is negotiated by caretaker with no written agreement | Exploited through untimely cash and in-kind payment |
| | | | | **2. Disability** | Lost two fingers 2 years back during stone quarrying activities. Caters for own medical bills. She supports her family | Believed to be hard working Feels economically and socially insecure | Confides in self and fellow children at stone quarry | Supportive family & community would ideal |
| | | | | **3. Gender** | Out of school adolescent girl Earns for her family. Family land sold off by paternal relatives No assets owned Caretaker decides on utilisation of income earned | Insufficient income earned | Obedient to caretaker | |

| Name | Age | Sex | District | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adokonyero | 16 | F | Nwoya | **Resources** | She eats one meal a day, second meal is food left overnight consumed as breakfast<br>Resides in family traditional grass thatched house | Third born and double orphan<br>Primary four school drop out<br>Reads and writes local language<br>Medical bills paid through labour | Has seven siblings and all live together. Three of these are into hazardous child labour<br><br>Active in netball and not a church goer | Insufficient meals and lacks balanced diet<br>Prone to diseases |
| | | | | **Domains** | | | | |
| | | | | **1. Hazardous child labour** | Five years at rice farm and works 6 days a week<br>At times, paid in kind such as sugar, silver fish and rice<br>*Earned an equivalent of USD, 680 equivalent) in the last 24 months*<br>*Meet own basic needs and supported family members* | Socially feels secure.<br>Caretaker negotiated for pay amount with no official work agreement<br>Economically feels insecure<br>Tensed up most of the time | Supports family to be valued and earn respect in the community | Exploited through in-kind payment<br>And paid untimely less cash compared to work done |
| | | | | **2. Disability** | Epileptic<br><br>Works and provides support to family members | Considered to be bewitched & possessed by the traditional evil spirit.<br>Often stressed. | Found strength among fellow children at the rice farm. | Supportive and friendly spaces essential |
| | | | | **3. Gender** | Female youth out of school.<br>Earn for her family.<br>No assets owned<br>Caretaker determines expenditure for money earned | Low income earned. | Working hard to earn and meet basic needs | More support needed |
| Okello | 17 | M | Gulu | **Resources** | Two meals a day composed of millet food, beans, potatoes and green vegetables<br>Shelter provided by caretaker A bigger part of family land grabbed after the war | Double orphan<br>Primary five school dropout<br><br>Reads and writes local language<br>Medical bills paid for in-kind through labour<br>. | Has five male non-disabled siblings that live with extended family members live far away<br>Participates in Catholic church youth activities | No balanced diet<br><br>Denied equality of opportunity to formal education |
| | | | | **Domains** | | | | |
| | | | | **1. Hazardous child labour** | Five (5) years at Laroo Stone quarry site and works five days a week<br>Uproot and bang gravels for sale and earn income for family.<br>*USD, 400 earned in in the last 24 months* | Feels socially secure<br>Physically & economically insecure<br>No chance to negotiate for pay amount<br>Struggles with burnout | Has four siblings and all live together with him and maternal Uncle<br>Works to contribute to family to be seen as useful<br>Meets own needs | Security is a prerequisite to good health |

| Name | Age | Sex | Location | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | *Supported family members*<br>*Bought personal items* | | | |
| | | | | 2. Disability | Epileptic<br>Segregated by family and community<br>Provides support to family | First-born boy child & not allowed to inherit property because lives with disability<br>Believed to be possessed by evil spirit<br>Often stressed. | Found strength in church group | More supportive and friendly spaces needed |
| | | | | 3. Gender | Out of school adolescent boy earning for his family through labour.<br><br>Expenditure decisions taken by his uncle, the caretaker<br>No assets owned | Perceived to be powerless compared to other boys of same age<br>Low income earned. | Working hard to meet needs of family and self | Communal support needed |
| Obwona | 16 | M | Gulu | Resources | One meal a day taken late afternoon and leftovers in the morning (millet and sweet potatoes, beans and silver fish with green vegetables)<br>Family shelter near sand mining site | Primary three school dropout due to frequent epileptic attacks that persisted<br>Double orphan and first-born child in family<br>Reads and writes local language fluently<br>Pays own medical bills | Participates in youth activities | Insufficient diet with low appetite often<br><br>Lost opportunity to formal education |
| | | | | **Domains** | | | | |
| | | | | 1. Hazardous child labour | Six (6) years at sand mining site, works 5 days a week<br>Digs sand and loads it to earn income for family.<br>*USD, 500 earned in in previous 24 months*<br>Supports family members<br>Buys personal items | Feels socially secure & economically insecure<br>No power to negotiate for pay amount<br>Tussles with stress | Works to be considered useful & meet own needs | Security is a prerequisite to good health<br><br>Appears a bit thin and malnourished |
| | | | | 2. Disability | Epileptic little person<br>Discriminated in family<br>Provides support to family | Second born boy child & can't inherit property<br>Believed to be possessed by evil spirit<br>Often stressed. | Found strength in group of persons with disabilities. | Supportive and friendly spaces |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | **3. Gender** | Out of school adolescent boy<br>Decision on expenditure caretaker<br>No assets owned | Perceived to be ineffective | Working hard | |
| Adongo | 17 | F | Nwoya | **Resources** | One meal a day (often millet, rice, sim-sim and water. A leftover meal consumed morning hours of the following day<br>Lives in own small shelter in family compound near rice farm | Primary three school dropout<br>First-born in family with three siblings<br>Pays own medical bills | Lost mother at age eight<br>Participates in church activities | No balanced diet low appetite<br><br>Denied equality of opportunity to education |
| | | | | **Domains** | | | | |
| | | | | **1. Hazardous child labour** | Five (5) years at rice farm and works 5 days a week<br>Earns in cash and in-kind<br>*USD, 400 earned in in previous 24 months*<br>Buys personal items<br>Sometimes paid in form of soap, rice and silver fish | Physically, psychologically & economically insecure<br>Opportunity to negotiate for pay amount | Works to be considered useful to own child & meet own needs | Security is a prerequisite to good health<br><br>Appears a bit thin and malnourished |
| | | | | **2. Disability** | Epileptic<br>Discriminated in family | First-born girl child<br>Believed to be possessed by evil spirit | Support to two siblings and own daughter.<br>Young mother with disability<br>Experienced sexual gender-based violence by elder brother and biological father<br>Got impregnated & had unwanted child<br>Found strength in group of persons with disabilities. | Supportive and supportive spaces |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | **3. Gender** | Young mother raped and got unwanted pregnancy<br>Decision on expenditure by self<br>No assets owned | Struggles with psychological trauma, stress and burnout.<br>Very low self-esteem | Working hard to meet own needs, child and siblings | More friendly spaces needed |
| Anyango | 15 | F | Nwoya | **Resources** | Two meals a day & majorly millet, rice, beans and silver fish<br>Shelter provided at rice farm<br>No assets owned | Double orphan<br>Primary five school dropout<br>Seven siblings<br>Able to read fluently and write<br>Caters for own medical costs<br>. | Not engaged in any community activities | Insufficient meals<br>No balanced diet<br>Poor appetite<br>Stress, burn out and psychological trauma |
| | | | | **Domains** | | | | |
| | | | | **1. Hazardous child labour** | Seven (7) years working at rice farm for 5 days a week<br>First-born child<br>*Untimely cash paid UGX 1, 101,600 (one million one hundred one thousand six hundred shillings) in 24 months (USD 306 equivalent).*<br>*Rice, sugar, salt, silver fish earned as in-kind payment*<br>*Bought Christmas clothes for self and family.* | Socially secure and economically insecure<br>Payment negotiated by caretaker<br>No written agreement with employer<br>Battles with anger<br>Apportions blame to parents | Meets own needs & supports family to be valued and accepted | Exploited through untimely cash and in-kind payment |
| | | | | **2. Disability** | Epileptic little person<br>Caters for own medical bills.<br>She supports her family | Believed to be possessed by traditional spirits | Confides in self and siblings | A supportive community is key |
| | | | | **3. Gender** | Out of school adolescent girl<br>Earns for self and family<br>No assets owned<br>Caretaker decides on utilisation of money earned | Low income earned<br>Psychological and emotional stress<br>Low self-esteem. | Obedience to culture | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lamunu | 15 | F | Gulu | **Resources** | Two meals a day (millet, rice, cassava, potatoes, beans, ground nuts and green vegetables)<br>Shelter provided at rice farm<br>No assets owned | Primary seven school dropout orphaned girl<br>Five siblings<br>Able to read fluently and write in both local language and English<br>Medical costs catered for by self | Member of youth group | No balanced diet<br>Low appetite |
| | | | | **Domains** | | | | |
| | | | | **Hazardous child labour** | Four (4) years in petty trade<br>First-born child<br>*Paid UGX 1, 195,200 (one million one hundred ninety five thousand two hundred shillings) in 24 moths (USD 332 equivalent).*<br>*Rice, sugar, salt, silver fish earned as in-kind payment*<br>*Bought Christmas clothes for self and family.* | Economically & psychologically insecure<br>Caretaker negotiates for pay<br>No written agreement with employer<br>Battles with emotional insecurity<br>Blame on parents | Supports family to be accepted | Exploited through in-kind payment |
| | | | | **Disability** | Little person<br>Caters for own medical bills and needs | Believed to be possessed by traditional spirits | Confides in one little person and fellow girls with disabilities | Supportive community is key |
| | | | | **Gender** | Out of school disabled adolescent girl<br>Sells to earn for the family<br>Economic decision by caretaker | Low income earned<br>Low self-esteem. | Hard work | |

In relation to the domain of **food and nutrition**, all eight children expressed that they mainly eat millet as their staple food. It can be concluded that historical and cultural legacies continue to inform and shape nutrition actions. When employers give food in the form of rice, beans and silver fish as part payment to children, it can be interpreted as having a nutritional related challenge trickling down to the local level where power and control over nutritional resources prevails.

In relation to **protection**, two of eight child study participants felt safe and secure given the **shelter** (traditional grass thatched houses) shared by family which was also provided at the farms where they work. However, in the traditional African setting, children never felt protected when not with their or extended families. The separation of families seems to have created a coping mechanism that we see today where children feel secure no matter where they find themselves. The ideal and most important factor today is that children's rights are fulfilled to their satisfaction (Uganda Constitution, 1997; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa[124]; CRC, 1989). This does not rule out children who are experiencing the feeling of being treated differently in families where they live, as in the following extract:

*"Whenever I request my grandmother for something like Vaseline or soap when mine is over, I do not get it immediately like my cousins. It takes time and I have to keep reminding her yet she always gives others in a short time after they have asked. Moreover, usually it is the little money that I work for that is used to buy some of these essential items[125]"*

Regarding **family support**, only three of eight children felt supported by their families when allowed to supply their labour and earn. However, decision making by parents and caretakers regarding spending the earned resources was dissatisfactory. This reflects how families depend on economic earnings by children with disabilities. It also raises questions of whether children can have any chance of taking independent economic decisions. Poverty that seems to have been one of the forces that emanate from the war, and according to UBOS, (2014:28) is a causative factor and consequently, its vicious circle continues and presents an obstruction to development.

In relation to **health,** all eight (8) children mentioned having suffered from diseases such as malaria in the last six months and six (6) of them were taken for treatment by their employers that expect them to pay back on recovery by means of offering their labour. Here, children in a

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[124]Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

[125] FGI 4, Child participant, Nwoya District 18.9.2018

post-conflict political economy are working to cater for their own medical bills amid stress and burnout. Although Uganda has established health centres in all sub-counties across the country, this finding affirms a gap in the health sector if the health needs of children are to be met. Medical treatment is not universally accessed. Depending on income, one can access better treatment in private health facilities that are unaffordable to these vulnerable children.

Regarding **economic opportunities**, the findings reveal that all eight (8) children were happy for the opportunity to work and meet their own needs besides contributing to the needs of their families. However, in the current political economy they feel economically insecure, yet they contribute their labour in the production process. Still they are faced with exploitation when paid an amount not equivalent to work performed or even in kind. In the background chapter we saw how children became involved in informal employment as a way of exploiting their cheap labour. The trend seems to be continuing today in northern Uganda. According to legislation, this is regarded not only as exploitation but as an unsafe way of increasing the gap between the poor and the rich. It is not clear whether northern Uganda being categorised as the poorest region in the country (UBOS, 2017; MFPED, 2014) is a trend that paves way for forces of exploitation of children with disabilities through their labour.

In relation to **community cohesion**, the findings reveal that six (6) of eight (8) children freely share their concerns with selected community members when faced with a problem. Although the social forces jeopardise family and community cohesion, the above finding affirms family dynamics in a post-conflict society where support to one another prevails by virtue of their culture. This concern is also highlighted in sub-section 1.1.2.1 of Chapter One and fronted by scholars (Muzurana, Carlson, Blattman & Annan, 2008; Liebling-Kalifan et. al, 2008). Bojer (2000: 25) also affirms how children have the right to be cared for and to remain in their communities.

In conclusion, children seem not to be faring well with regard to most of the universal well-being dimensions. However, this should not be transferable to apply to all children with disabilities and their families. Moreover, situations of well-being may change over time.

**8.5 The perceived links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war Acholi**

The purpose of this objective was to explore whether there is any distinguished connection between the three themes in a post-war context of Acholi.

Although the findings generally reveal scarcity of information, participants give examples on how the three constructs are inter-linked reflecting how gender relations is a cross-cutting theme. At household level, men engage in most of the decisions, including in the decision that children go to work and earn to supplement family income. They also decide on how the earned sum of money is utilised. This reflects gender roles in decision making that impacts negatively on the lives of girls and boys with physical disabilities and breeds gender inequality and a power imbalance. Figure 9 below is a representation of how social justice and well-being of children is compromised as a result of poor gender relations at household level that present the driving factors into hazardous child labour and expose them to various forms of disabilities.

*Figure 9: Displays the fluid connection between the three factors at the same level and linked to social (in) justice and well(ill)-being of children with disabilities in hazardous labour*
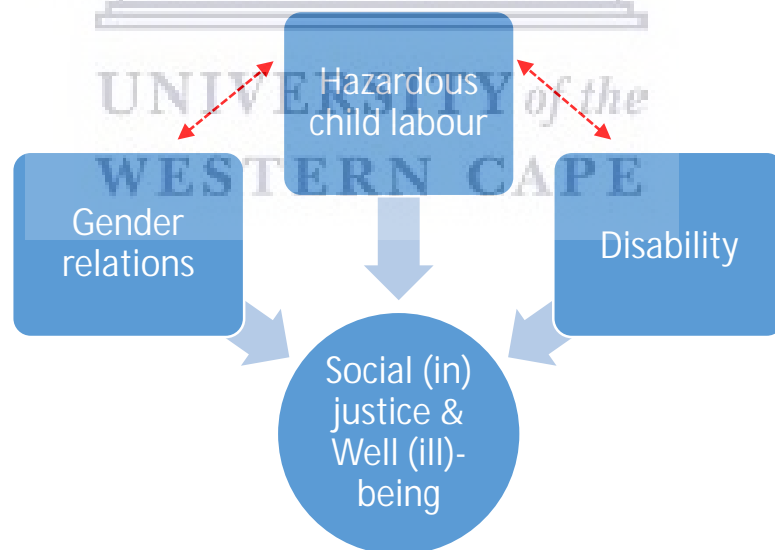


*Source: Author, 2020*

Children with physical disabilities and in hazardous labour testify to playing roles according to gender and cultural considerations. For instance, boy children in a stone quarry uproot

gravels - a role specifically for males. Boys with physical disabilities narrate how it requires a lot of energy and would be a difficult task for their female counterparts. Meanwhile, girls do the bashing of gravels into pieces and sizes required by the customers.

In addition, today, there are no clear numbers of girls and boys with disabilities in informal employment amid the double vulnerability before them. Today, girls work in large agricultural farms, sand mines and stone quarries. This confirms the inter-relatedness of the mentioned three factors. On the other hand, these three factors do stand independently as each connects to different cultural beliefs and practices that jeopardise the well-being of children. For instance, all children with physical disabilities narrate how they are treated differently in society due to cultural beliefs and practices related to disability. In this way, disability becomes the major influencing factor that hinders social justice and thus affects their well-being.  Through the study, it is also noted how gender roles are socially influenced, but when it comes to work that has a component of payment either in cash or in-kind, girls and boys engage in similar kind of work with  the  major goal of earning to meet basic needs. In addition, the fact that children live with disabilities is not in any way a single contributory factor to their involvement in hazardous child labour, but there are driving factors such as poverty, and being the first-born child required to contribute to family income, among others. It can therefore be concluded that although the three factors are interwoven and deny children their social justice and well-being in society, each dimension can be a standalone aspect in doing so, especially when linked to culture and poverty rendering the girl child most vulnerable in all circumstances.

The above experiences of children make it clear that their well-being in terms of safety as well as emotions and feelings about their situation is vital, as detailed in sub-section 4.2.5. In addition, collective approaches to addressing effects of armed conflict require urgent consideration, namely: a strategy to prevent children from war risks, rebuilding ruined lives, upholding international standards and laws and lastly, holding violators responsible as discussed on page 59 in Chapter Three.

**8.6 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the study findings in relation to the well-being approach while greatly reflecting the voices of study participants. The study findings reveal evidently how the three study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability influence each other as experiences of participants unfold through their voices. The study also concludes that culture is typically a cross-cutting aspect that seems to influence most of what happens in the Acholi post-war affected communities. Gender inequality continues to persist leading to gender-related injustices that have surfaced with a strong connection to culture as children are faced with deprivation and exploitation. The study observes how family, as an agency, determines the roles, goals and motivation of children with physical disabilities and how they are trapped into hazardous labour. The findings raise questions of self-realisation and what is regarded as a good life for children and their communities. Moreover, given the post-traumatic era in which they live, the need for them to pursue their life goals and aspirations must be at the top of the agenda. The involvement of children with disabilities in hazardous labour does not only expose them to multiple disabilities but also denies them an opportunity to collectively interact socially and to participate in beneficial societal programmes.
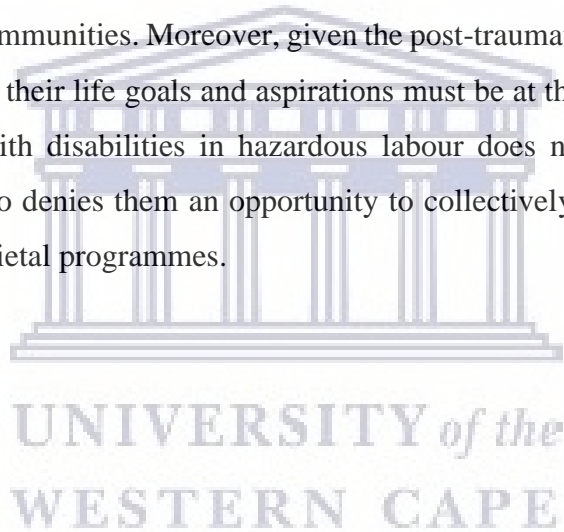
## REFLECTIONS, GENERAL CONCLUSION, RESEARCH AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9.1 Chapter Introduction

This study is concerned with the synergy between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. It set out to examine how the interconnectedness of these three factors impact on the well-being of children in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. The study involved five objectives that are clearly indicated in Chapter One. This chapter entails a reflection on the key aspects that have surfaced in the previous chapters. It begins with an illustration (Figure 10) that summarises the key facets of the thesis. The chapter also presents the ways in which the study has changed the author's understanding of the three concepts under investigation. It concludes and presents the appropriate recommendations. Below is an illustration of key aspects that guided the study as highlighted in Figure 10.

*Figure 10: Summary of the research project*

**Literature gap**

- Studies relating to themes, namely gender relations, hazardous child labour, disability mainly conducted in isolation
- There is hardly any documentation on the link between the three themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in the post-war context. The three are studied without prioritising any

**Theoretical Foundation**

- The well-being theory (McGregor, 2007).
- The social justice theory (Rawls, 1971 Fraser & Fraser, 1997, 1998 & 2007).

**Aims of the Study**

- The main aim was to examine how gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability influence each other to impact the well-being of disabled working children in a post-war context of the Acholi-region of northern Uganda. The specific aims were:
- To explore the nature of gender relations in households of working children living with physical disabilities in post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda
- To establish how hazardous child labour relates to disability in post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda
- To explore the impact of the existing social justice system on hazardous child labour in post-war northern Uganda
- To examine the well-being of hazardous child labourers living with disability in post-war northern Uganda
- To explore the perceived links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war northern Uganda

**Research Questions**

- What is the nature of gender relations in households of working children with physical disabilities in northern Uganda?
- How does hazardous child labour relate to disability in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda?
- What is the impact of the existing social justice system on hazardous child labour in post-war northern Uganda?
- How is the well-being of hazardous child labourers with physical disabilities in post-war northern Uganda?
- What is the perceived link between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war northern Uganda?

**Sources of Empirical Data**

- Focus group interviewss (32 FGDs in total)
- Individual interviews (8 in total)
- Draw and write exercises/technique (10 in total)
- Field notes and audios
- Participant observation

**Source: *Researcher, 2020***

This chapter highlights reflections on each research question that aids in presenting a concluding view of the whole study. Reference was made to the outstanding voices in the stories of participants. It is important to remember that the study focused on the pre-war, war and post-war period as none of them can stand in isolation in order to inform the present.

> *1.What is the nature of gender relations in households of working children with disabilities in post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda?*

The purpose of this investigation was to establish the nature of gender relations among households of parents and guardians of children with physical disabilities and whether it has any influence on hazardous child labour.

There exists a clear understanding of the key concept, namely gender relations. Participants had consensus on a definition similar to that of other scholars. The nature of gender relations was revealed through the roles and responsibilities, resource allocation and utilisation as well as decision-making practices. Distorted gender relations in families are a contributory factor to increased hazardous child labour in post-war communities. This became evident when the researcher notes that major resources such as land and livestock are owned by men and boys while perishables are allocated to women and girls. Decision-making powers are in the hands of men and boys. The findings reveal that irrespective of sex, all people in northern Uganda including men, women and children were encamped for close to 20 years and therefore there were not many opportunities to engage in productive work. A strong cultural belief exists that men and boys are superior in decision making and thus women and girls, especially those with disabilities, do not have power to do so. The onset of war marked the end of a powerful community cohesion, resulting in families taking care of children individually rather than the collective practice that prevailed previously. Today, each family works for their own survival amid a high dependency ratio coupled with poverty, hence the involvement of children with disabilities to contribute to family survival. It important to remember that personal and social well-being of children adds value in terms of reaching their dreams and contributes to the development of their own families and communities.

> *2. How does hazardous child labour relate to disability in the post war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda?*

This research question set out to explore whether there is any link between hazardous child labour and disability in the post-war context of northern Uganda.

Children with disabilities were ignored and hidden in houses in the pre-war period. They only gained some recognition when charity organisations made effort to trace them during the war. After the war, given the high dependence ratio, children were also obliged to contribute to putting food on the table and thus had to engage in various works for pay. Moreover, in recent years, a number of NGOs that were supportive closed office in the sub-region. Consequently, there were no more hand-outs to families and thus the absence of own basic needs became a driving factor into hazardous child labour, irrespective of whether a child lives with disability. Some children acquire particular disabilities while working on agricultural farms, at stone quarries and sand mining sites. The increase in hazardous child labour among children with physical disabilities is attributed to the mushrooming numbers of investors setting up farms in the region. Along with this, some caretakers are aged and others live with disabilities too. Children have turned out to be caretakers that have to fend for family survival and have had to engage in hazardous labour for pay. These and many other factors reveal a strong relationship between disability and hazardous child labour in the post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda.

> *3.What is the impact of the existing social justice systems on hazardous child labour in post-war Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda?*

The purpose of this exploration was to find out whether any social justice systems are in existence in the Acholi sub-region and how these impact on hazardous child labour. There is a communal understanding of social justice. Family cohesion is noted to be weak as a result of war that drastically changed the social norms and values contrary to the pre-war period when children were gathered around fire places and taught values of social justice such as equity and diversity and were provided with a supportive environment. Today, focus falls on family survival strategies.

Among other children's rights, the most commonly known are the right to food and education. Poverty is an impeding factor to fulfilling children's right to education. None of the FGI participants pointed to any western policy or law in Uganda concerning hazardous child labour and disability. There seems to be poor dissemination mechanisms in the post-war area. Last but not least, the local and traditional restorative judicial approaches were commonly applied under the auspice of the local leaders soon after the war as part of the local coordination mechanism for the restoration of justice. This occurred through a series of traditional rituals. Taboos about do's and don'ts on how families should treat and groom children in an acceptable way were common. There are no specific groups purposely organised for promoting social justice to children.

On the whole, not much attention is being devoted to promoting social justice to children with disabilities involved in hazardous child labour. It is therefore not surprising, as evidenced by their voices, that children continue to be exploited by being paid less, paid late and paid in-kind with an amount that is not equivalent or worth their effort as evidenced in Chapter Eight.

> *4.What is the well-being of children with physical disabilities involved in hazardous child labour in a post-war Acholi-sub-region of northern Uganda?*

This exploration envisaged to understand children's perspectives in terms of how they experience life in view of a holistic perspective. It was achieved based on a series of domains that are related to social and economic aspects, including food and nutrition, shelter/housing, health, security, social cohesion in community and attachment to own religious faith among others. Children describe and define well-being depending on their personal experience and how they are treated in their families and communities. Most of the descriptions relate to emotional and personal well-being. Children's well-being in post-war northern Uganda is still hampered by a number of factors highlighted in Chapter Seven and Eight. However, this finding may not be transferable as life conditions keep changing with time.
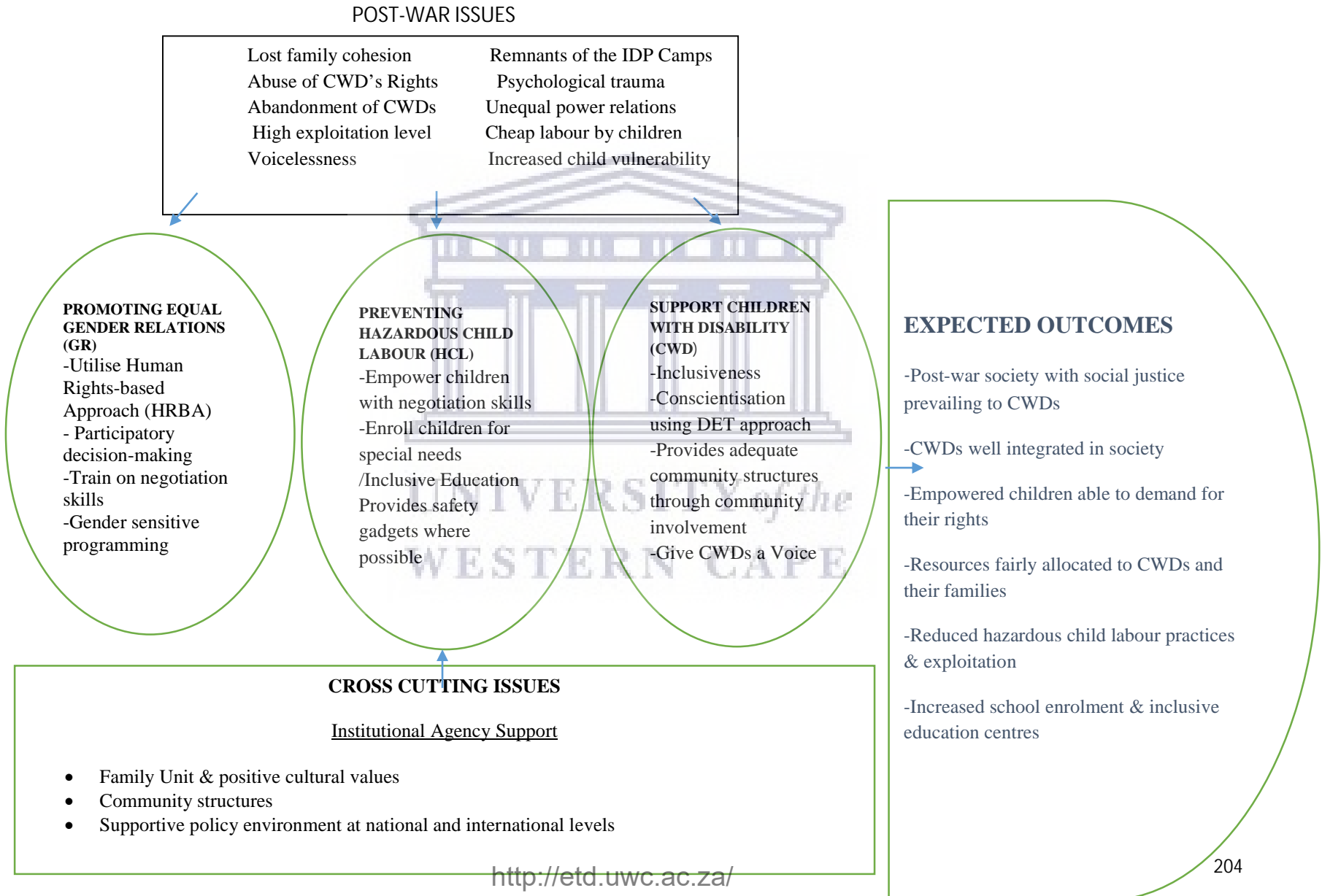
> *5. What are the perceived links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda?*

The study explored whether there is any distinguishing connection between the three themes in post-war Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda. Amid paucity of information, the study findings revealed that gender relations constitute influencing and driving factors into hazardous child labour thus leading to already vulnerable children to acquire various forms of disabilities. Participants gave particular examples that illustrated their own perceived links between the three study themes, and it was therefore concluded that a strong relationship exists between them.

The findings of this study have changed the researcher's understanding of the three concepts under investigation and seem to influence her future engagement in further research and development practice. First, focusing research on young children increased the researcher's understanding of ethical considerations on research involving children. It has also put to light the origins of differences in gender relations in a post war context, shining light on when and how gendered cognitions and behaviours first emerge. It has also added to the researcher's understanding of the socialization process as it happens at family and community level, and more specifically as it relates to children with disabilities that have to fend for family survival. The study has not only challenged the researcher to formulate more complex research goals in her future articles but has also been a motivation to conduct more research on children and publish more child-focused articles in anticipation that this will continue to give a voice to the vulnerable children, such as those with disabilities.

A reflection on the findings in this chapter leads the researcher to a proposed evidence-based intervention model on gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability, the general conclusion, research and policy recommendations. First, attention is devoted to the evidence–based model - illustrated in Figure 11.

*Figure 11: An inclusive evidence-based Gender Child labour and Disability (GCD) intervention model on links between gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in post-war social and development practice*

POST-WAR ISSUES

| | |
|---|---|
| Lost family cohesion | Remnants of the IDP Camps |
| Abuse of CWD's Rights | Psychological trauma |
| Abandonment of CWDs | Unequal power relations |
| High exploitation level | Cheap labour by children |
| Voicelessness | Increased child vulnerability |

**PROMOTING EQUAL GENDER RELATIONS (GR)**
-Utilise Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA)
- Participatory decision-making
-Train on negotiation skills
-Gender sensitive programming

**PREVENTING HAZARDOUS CHILD LABOUR (HCL)**
-Empower children with negotiation skills
-Enroll children for special needs /Inclusive Education Provides safety gadgets where possible

**SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY (CWD)**
-Inclusiveness
-Conscientisation using DET approach
-Provides adequate community structures through community involvement
-Give CWDs a Voice

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

-Post-war society with social justice prevailing to CWDs

-CWDs well integrated in society

-Empowered children able to demand for their rights

-Resources fairly allocated to CWDs and their families

-Reduced hazardous child labour practices & exploitation

-Increased school enrolment & inclusive education centres

**CROSS CUTTING ISSUES**

Institutional Agency Support

- Family Unit & positive cultural values
- Community structures
- Supportive policy environment at national and international levels

204

*Source: Researcher, 2020*

The above model has been proposed by this study for organisations that are interested in the plight of children with disabilities engaged in hazardous labour in a post-war context. It is a unique model that reflects the challenges that appear more often in a post-war context. The onset of the war in northern Uganda led to the loss of family cohesion that is still evident today. Some families lived in Internally People's Displaced Camps and the remnants are still present today. This has resulted in psychological trauma of parents and caretakers that are constrained with the ability to meet basic family needs. This trauma has also been extended to the current generation of children whose rights have been violated to the extent that there is added vulnerability of children with disabilities that were exposed to driving factors into providing cheap labour to contribute to family survival. This aspect of psychosocial trauma is also evidenced in Chapter 3. Their efforts are confronted with exploitation through in-kind payment and less cash payment that is not in any way equivalent to the work done. These and many other factors indicated above evolved to contribute to new knowledge and reflect on any relationship that exists between gender relations in families and its connection to hazardous child labour among children with physical disabilities.

This model is also unique in that it identifies crucial barriers that are connected to the three themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability in the lives of CWDs in hazardous labour and their families. It connects to multiple themes, an approach that is critical in addressing contemporary social issues in a post-war environment.

In addition, the model proposes a human rights-based approach when addressing gender issues in hazardous child labour among children with disabilities, especially girls that are most vulnerable to such circumstances. This approach ensures consultation with children with disabilities in hazardous labour and empowers them to become active participants in their own development process. Thus, when conscientised together with their families, children are likely to question their reality and propose alternative ways for promoting well-being. Current employers may be motivated to end exploitative practices to which they have subjected children. While the traditional model which embraces cultural beliefs and practices on disability seems to disempower children with disabilities and contributes to violation of their rights, a well-being approach supported by a

social justice perspective would allow for policies and practice that would create an enabling and positive environment for disabled children in contexts as have been described.

It should be noted that the (GCD) intervention model has potential to address the multi-layered and complex matters that have led to social injustices and ill-health of children with disabilities, using intersectionality as a lens. Therefore, developing activities according to the local context, needs and resources is vital to the entire process. The GCD intervention model also synthesises experiences in Northern Uganda and paves the way to encourage empowerment of children with disabilities and their families. The inclusion and participation of children with disabilities and their families in all decision-making processes cannot be underestimated.

To sum it up, the inclusive evidence based GCD intervention model shows the need for policymakers, service providers, education institutions and community leadership structures to build capacity of local community and national forums to support family and community initiatives that will safe guard the rights of children, especially girl children, women and those with disabilities. The GCD model advocates for a focus to shift from the individual child with a disability to focus on strengthening family and community systems. It is adaptable to contexts where children experience any kind of oppression, marginalisation or disadvantage.

## 9.2 General Conclusion

This study provides evidence-based local data from the Acholi sub-region on working children with disabilities. It informs relevant institutions, policy makers and planners interested in the plight of children affected by war to review current interventions, policies and programmes in northern Uganda. The study focused on the pre-war, war and post-war periods to provide the background to what is currently happening in the Acholi sub-region in regard to the study themes. Therefore, based on the above summary of the study findings, it has been concluded that the three study themes of gender relations, hazardous child labour and disability highly influence each other in the post-war context of the Acholi-sub-region. Culture has strongly surfaced as a cross-cutting theme that seems to influence all that happens at household and community level, including gender relations that are driving factors into hazardous child labour that expose children to acquire

disabilities. The cultural beliefs and practices also seem to impact lives negatively thus impeding social justice and the well-being of children with physical disabilities.

Some children acquire some forms of disabilities while in work situations, besides being faced with exploitation such as being paid little cash that is not equivalent to the work done and sometimes in-kind payment that is exploitative.

There is no doubt that hazardous child labour persists because of needs that have to be met, dynamics in families in a post-conflict setting, cultural aspects as well as alternative activities available for children that have not had an opportunity for schooling but are kept home because of disabilities.

It can be concluded that attending to children's needs in a timely manner, showing love and affection, being supportive and portraying a spirit of trust and love seem to be a viable alternative towards preventing hard and dangerous labour engagement among children with disabilities.

It is against this background that the study proposes research and policy recommendations detailed in the next sub-section.

## 9.3 Research and Policy Recommendations

In making policy recommendations, the researcher has been cognisant of the first of Rawls' social justice principle concerning equal rights to extensive liberty. This principle is detailed in Chapter five under sub-section **5.2.**

In order to strengthen solidarity mechanisms and local coordination for promoting social justice to children, specific groups or community committees need to be organised at community level to oversee implementation. Local community leaders and residents of the area need to formulate and implement legislation to stop employers of farms and workplaces from employing children below age 18. Legislation should include the necessary steps and measures to be taken when one gets injured as well as the mode for compensation. Gender equality should be ensured in all steps and representation of disabled persons on these committees should be key to encourage them to voice their concerns. In addition, the same legislation should emphasise the minimum wage as articulated by the Minimum Wage Bill. Besides this, the study recommends official recruitment procedures for casual labourers to work on agricultural farms, stone quarry and sand

mining sites. Local leaders should be part of these efforts to ensure gender equality in representation.

Furthermore, a minimum education level should be considered in employing young people at informal working stations, for instance, a minimum of senior four level. This would assist education efforts as the government of Uganda has introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) Policies that are not being embraced by employers and caretakers of children. Children with disabilities would benefit from these programmes too. When found guilty, employers of such children should be fined with a minimum amount. When legislation for minimum level of education is enforced, the number of child labourers will be greatly reduced thereby reducing social injustices to children and improving their well-being.

Uganda's programme for the elderly should purposely be inclusive of the war-affected vulnerable elderly women and men that are burdened with care of OVC yet have no source of income and are faced with double vulnerability, including psychological trauma. The psychological consequences in this regard involve impaired decision making thus compromising personal and social well-being, not only of these caretakers but also of children with physical disabilities, their families and communities at large because children are pushed by these circumstances into undue hazardous child labour to fend for the family and in turn become caretakers that are faced with multiple exploitation in the process of struggling with such a parental role.

Children are required to enjoy cognitive, healthy, behavioural and physical development in their childhood to enable them to develop into adults that have potential to transform their post-war affected communities. If this opportunity is not permitted, then the vicious cycle of poverty will continue to trap multiple generations in the post-war sub-regions. Therefore, the need to eliminate hazardous child labour of all forms among the already vulnerable disabled girls and boys is extremely urgent and should be addressed timeously.

In order to transform gender relations and promote empathetic understanding, there is a need to disseminate the Ugandan national gender policy while relating it clearly to life experiences of people in a post-war context. For the sake of observing children's rights, a similar strategy needs

to be adapted. This is proposed because the study affirmed that a number of participants hear about children's rights but are not specifically aware of the actual content in the relevant policies.

The need to conscientise people in the life-constraining aspects of the Acholi culture such as those relating to disempowering children with disabilities without compromising the life-giving aspects remains urgent. In addition, there is need to cultivate a sense of belief in self as well as confidence among girls and women in Acholi for them to be able to visualise their future. This will add value to their well-being and have them desire and ask for what is justly theirs towards social justice where it is due.

A Disability Equality Training (DET) programme needs to be designed, tailor made and implemented in the Acholi sub-region to educate the masses on the models of disability with particular emphasis on the social model that renders children and people with disabilities in general as the experts of their own development process. This will assist in dealing with the constraining beliefs and practices on disability that seem to be a disempowering factor for persons with disabilities.

There is need to create a Quarry Workers' Health Right Defenders Forum. This forum will be responsible for ensuring that children below the minimum working age are not employed at the site, and that mothers do not take their young ones to work given the various risks involved. The forum should identify partners to hold monthly medical screenings and a treatment camp at the site whenever a need arises. They should also raise awareness across the mining villages on health and human rights issues related to stone and sand mining work. This will create a safer workplace for children such as those that were part of this study.

Government and development practitioners need to urgently set up childcare centres around stone and sand mining sites to protect children, especially those below age five (5) whose lives are at risk. These child centres will be home to such children and to those whose parents/ caregivers are unable to take care of them and provide for their early childhood education.

Buyers and traders should boycott the purchase of agricultural items produced through the use of hazardous child labour as a way of contributing to curb this despicable practice in Uganda.

**9.4 Other Research Recommendations**

This study focused on children that live with various forms of physical disabilities. However, in the process, there were a few cases of invisible forms of disability such as sickle cell anaemia and haemophilia reported in families of some study participants. There is need for a specific study on such children that live in a post-war environment that should result in policy to address this gap. The situation of this category of children is worse in the area of HIV/Aids where they require frequent blood transfusions. Blood has to be available for people with such disabilities, especially when they have no relatives that can provide in this regard.

Families also need to be conscientised, trained, coached and mentored or equipped on positive parenting to create a safe and loving environment for children's well-being and care. Specific focus should point to families of children with disabilities that have unimaginable driving factors into hazardous labour for survival, a situation that adds to their vulnerability.

The government needs to call for constitutionalism or compliance to constitutionalism as opposed to traditionalism. A number of people are traditional because their economic activities have not been transformed. There is need for decent employment opportunities to attract people away from the tradition. People should also be supported to gain life skills to take back responsibility of their children. Skilling and supporting children irrespective of disability is a critical factor, more specifically, skilling and supporting disabled girls above 18 years and women to work for self-reliance and development.

There is need to transform the Acholi tradition in a manner that is friendly to children with disability, as well as the children and women. There is need for conscientisation of men that treat women as a weaker sex stemming from patriarchy. The same approach must be undertaken to benefit children with physical disabilities that are treated as being unable to contribute productively to their communities.

The government of Uganda needs to set up a Girls and Women's Economic Empowerment Policy to boost income for vulnerable families, specifically in populations affected by the war. This will aid in reducing the inequality gap, promote social justice and ensure the well-being of children and their families.

The government of Uganda should take care of children who have matured and others who are still growing up without identity even if they have been adopted by families. Some of these children are with disabilities and no one wants to take responsibility for them. Therefore, they opt to work in order to eat and survive. Strategies should be devised to provide help to families and communities in order to relate with their children in a better way. This will ensure that social justice and well-being are not compromised in order to create harmony and sustainable peace.

There is urgent need for civic education so that the natives of the Acholi sub-region are conversant about issues of family planning as well as asset creation so that children are not viewed as a burden.

The communal way of relating, working and sharing is a better approach not only to promote social justice but to also ensure the well-being of children. The communal utilisation of resources has a positive impact in society as people work together.

The social, cultural and political structures need to positively shape the well-being of girls and boys with disabilities. This implies that the cultural norms, values, ideologies and expectations need to rhyme with the bargaining power of children with disabilities to enable them to earn for the welfare of their families amid social forces and processes that shape disability and gender relations.

**9.5 Areas for further research**
  ➢ A study is required on the implication for in-kind payment to children with disabilities who are involved in hazardous labour in a post-war context
  ➢ A study needs to be conducted periodically on children's well-being as situations keep changing in a post-war context
  ➢ A specific study needs to be conducted on the local co-ordination mechanisms and solidarity mechanisms on social justice concerning children in post-war context
  ➢ A study on children with hearing impairment must be done as they are believed to be very strong and able do a lot of manual work. Specifically, the study should look at how employers communicate with these children and how do they generally fit within the working environment

- ➢ An investigation must be done into child mothers working under hard conditions struggling for a livelihood with no other option.
- ➢ An investigation of elderly caretakers with disabilities without any meaningful source of income amid the responsibility of providing for their families is needed
- ➢ An investigation of the psychosocial and economic implications on children that are taking care of the elders who they refer to as their "caretakers" just in view of their age when in actual sense these elders have more severe disabilities and cannot practically provide for the family would provide valuable further insight
- ➢ There is need for a scientific study on the status of recovery of the Acholi sub-region. The current recovery programmes seem to be more theoretical by trying to get the status of northern Uganda on par with the rest of the regions.

There is no doubt that the strength of this study lies in the full participation of children of post-war northern Uganda as well as their parents and caretakers. The insights brought to light will not only aid in enhancing their well-being but also that of their families and communities.
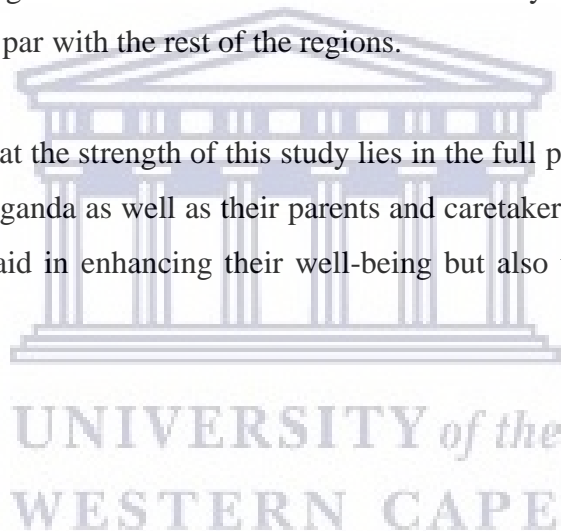
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## Appendix A1: Ethical Approval Letter-University of the Western Cape (UWC)

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE (UWC) FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES (EMS)**

*Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa*

*Telephone :(021) 959 3858/6  Fax: (021) 959 3865*

*E-mail:* cconradie@uwc.ac.za

 1st August, 2017

Ms. Nakijoba Rosemary

Student No: **2017/PhD/3700035**

Dear Ms. Nakijoba,

**RE: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR DATA COLLECTION**

This is to officially inform you that you have satisfied the requirements and the Faculty Post Graduate Committee has approved your proposal titled *"The Synergy between Gender Rrelations, Child Labour and Disability in Post-War Acholi Sub-region of Northern Uganda"*. You are authorized to proceed and carry out research in Gulu and Nwoya Districts; your study area as indicated in the academic proposal.

Any assistance rendered to you for ethical clearance in Uganda will be highly appreciated.

Thank you and best regards

Dr. Ina Conradie

Senior Lecturer

Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape

## Appendix A2: Ethical Approval Letter- Gulu University

**GULU**  
P.O. Box 166 Gulu Uganda  
Website: www.gu.ac  
Email: guluuniversity.rec@gmail.com  
lekobai@gmail.com

**UNIVERSITY**  
Tel: +256-4714-32096  
Fax: +256-4714-32913  
Mob: +256772305621  
+256776812147

### RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

2nd March 2018

### APPROVAL NOTICE

To: **Nakijoba Rosemary**  
Principal Investigator  
University of the Western Cape (UWC),  
Republic of South Africa

Re: **Application No. GUREC-021-18**

Type of review:  
[X] Initial review  
[ ] Amendment  
[ ] Continuing review  
[ ] Termination of study  
[ ] SAEs  
[ ] Other, Specify:_____

*GULU UNIVERSITY*  
*INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE*  
**APPROVED**  
★ 0 2 MAR 2018 ★  
FACULTY OF MEDICINE  
P. O. Box 166, Gulu

Title of proposal: **"The Inter-relationship between Gender, Child Labour, and Disability among War Affected Communities of Northern Uganda"**

I am pleased to inform you that at the 34th convened meeting on the 1st December 2017, the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (**GUREC**) voted to approve the above referenced application.

Approval of the research is for the period of **2nd March 2018** to **1st March 2019**

As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.

2. Changes, amendments, and addenda to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the **GUREC** for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the

**Appendix A3: Ethical Approval Letter- Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST)**

**Uganda National Council for Science and Technology**

*(Established by Act of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda)*

UNCST

Our Ref: SS113ES

6ᵗʰ August 2019

Ms. Rosemary Nakijoba
Principal Investigator
Ndejje University
**Kampala**

I am pleased to inform you that on **06/08/2019**, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) approved your study titled, **The Synergy between Gender Relations, Child Labour and Disability in the Post – War Acholi Sub – Region of Northern Uganda.** The Approval is valid for the period of **06/08/2019 to 06/08/2021.**

Your study reference number is **SS113ES**. Please, cite this number in all your future correspondences with UNCST in respect of the above study.

Please, note that as Principal Investigator, you are responsible for:

1. Keeping all co-investigators informed about the status of the study.
2. Submitting any changes, amendments, and addenda to the study protocol or the consent form, where applicable, to the designated local Research Ethics Committee (REC) or Lead Agency, where applicable, for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes.
3. Notifying UNCST about the REC or lead agency approved changes, where applicable, within five working days.
4. For clinical trials, reporting all serious adverse events promptly to the designated local REC for review with copies to the National Drug Authority.
5. Promptly reporting any unanticipated problems involving risks to study subjects/participants to the UNCST.
6. Providing any new information which could change the risk/benefit ratio of the study to the UNCST for final registration and clearance.
7. Submitting annual progress reports electronically to UNCST. Failure to do so may result in termination of the research project.

Please, note that this approval includes all study related tools submitted as part of the application.

Yours sincerely,

Hellen Opolot
For: Executive Secretary
**UGANDA NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**
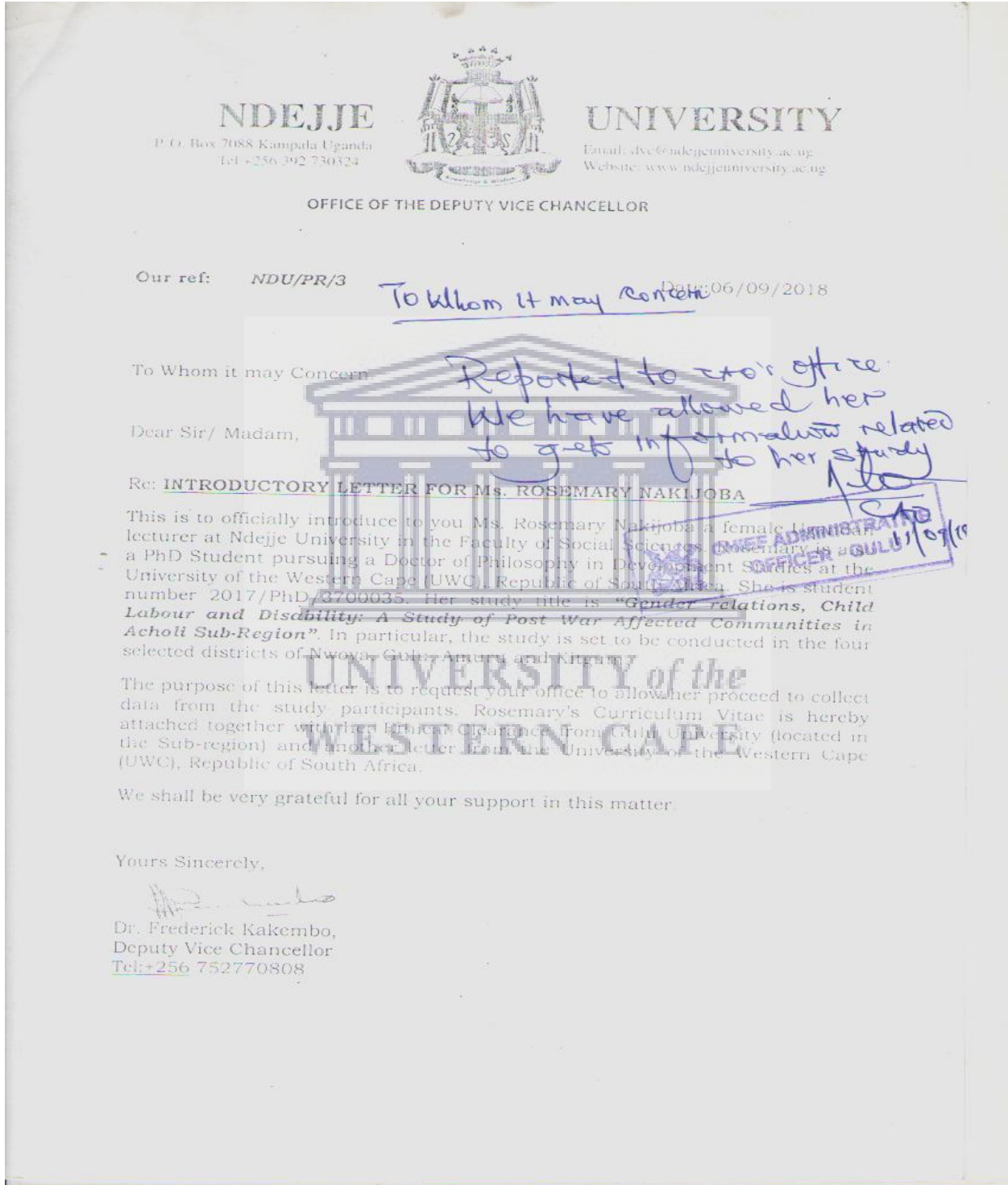
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**LOCATION/CORRESPONDENCE**

*Plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda*
*P. O. Box 6884*
*KAMPALA, UGANDA*

**COMMUNICATION**

**TEL: (256) 414 705500**
**FAX: (256) 414-234579**
**EMAIL: info@uncst.go.ug**
**WEBSITE: http://www.uncst.go.ug**

## Appendix A4: Ethical Approval  Office of the Chief Administrative Officer-Gulu District

**NDEJJE UNIVERSITY**

P. O. Box 7088 Kampala Uganda
Tel +256 392 730324

Email: dvc@ndejjeuniversity.ac.ug
Website: www.ndejjeuniversity.ac.ug

### OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR

Our ref:    NDU/PR/3                                    Date:06/09/2018

*To Whom It may Concern*

To Whom it may Concern

Dear Sir/ Madam,

*Reported to cao's office.
We have allowed her
to get information related
to her study*

Re: **INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR Ms. ROSEMARY NAKIJOBA**

This is to officially introduce to you Ms. Rosemary Nakijoba a female lecturer at Ndejje University in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Rosemary is a PhD Student pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Republic of South Africa. She is student number 2017/PhD/3700035. Her study title is *"Gender relations, Child Labour and Disability: A Study of Post War Affected Communities in Acholi Sub-Region".* In particular, the study is set to be conducted in the four selected districts of Nwoya, Gulu, Amuru and Kitgum.

The purpose of this letter is to request your office to allow her proceed to collect data from the study participants. Rosemary's Curriculum Vitae is hereby attached together with a letter of clearance from Gulu University (located in the Sub-region) and another letter from the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Republic of South Africa.

We shall be very grateful for all your support in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Frederick Kakembo,
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Tel:+256 752770808

**Appendix A5: Ethical Approval - Office of the Chief Administrative Officer-Nwoya District**

## NDEJJE UNIVERSITY

P. O. Box 7088 Kampala Uganda
Tel:+256 392 730324

Email: dvc@ndejjeuniversity.ac.ug
Website: www.ndejjeuniversity.ac.ug

### OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR

Our ref:     NDU/PR/3                                    Date:06/09/2018

To Whom it may Concern.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re: **INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR Ms. ROSEMARY NAKIJOBA**

This is to officially introduce to you Ms. Rosemary Nakijoba a female Ugandan lecturer at Ndejje University in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Rosemary is also a PhD Student pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Republic of South Africa. She is student number 2017/PhD/3700035. Her study title is *"Gender relations, Child Labour and Disability: A Study of Post War Affected Communities in Acholi Sub-Region"*. In particular, the study is set to be conducted in the four selected districts of Nwoya, Gulu, Amuru and Kitgum.

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We shall be very grateful for all your support in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Frederick Kakembo,
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Tel:+256 752770808

# NDEJJE UNIVERSITY

P.O. Box 7088 Kampala Uganda
Tel:+256 392 730324

Email: dvc@ndejjeuniversity.ac.ug
Website: www.ndejjeuniversity.ac.ug

## OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR

Our ref:    NDU/PR/3

Date:06/09/2018

To Whom it may Concern.

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: **INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR Ms. ROSEMARY NAKIJOBA**

This is to officially introduce to you Ms. Rosemary Nakijoba a female Ugandan lecturer at Ndejje University in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Rosemary is also a PhD Student pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Republic of South Africa. She is student number 2017/PhD/3700035. Her study title is *"Gender relations, Child Labour and Disability: A Study of Post War Affected Communities in Acholi Sub-Region".* In particular, the study is set to be conducted in the four selected districts of Nwoya, Gulu, Amuru and Kitgum.

The purpose of this letter is to request your kind office to let her proceed to collect data from the study participants. Rosemary's Curriculum Vitae is hereby attached together with her Ethical Clearance from Ndejje University (located in the Sub-region) and another letter from the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Republic of South Africa.

We shall be very grateful for all your support in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Frederick Kakembo,
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Tel:+256 752770808

Permission Granted.
Please go ahead and
Conduct the Study in
the subject area.
Share the findings
will the District.

## Appendix B: Focus group interviews Guide/s

Dear Parents/caretakers,

**Focus group interviews (FGI) Guide for a study on the synergy between gender relations, Child labour and Disability in post war Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda**

My name is Rosemary Nakijoba and I am currently studying for a PhD in Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. I am conducting a research project which seeks to establish the synergy between gender relations, child labour and disability in Post-war Northern Uganda. I would greatly appreciate it if you would participate in this study through Focus group interviews. Please be assured that the findings of this study will be used for academic purposes only. The information you give will be treated with confidentiality and your name will not be written anywhere for purposes of maintaining anonymity. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw if you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the study.

Your time and patience in discussing the questions is much appreciated.

_____

Ms Rosemary Nakijoba                                Dr. Ina Conradie
Researcher                                                     Supervisor

## GUIDELINE FOR FOCUS GROUP WITH PARENTS AND CARETAKERS

1. Could you please share with us your understanding of the following concepts
   a) Gender relations   b) Child labour c) Disability d) Well-being e) Social justice
2. Describe some of the spousal relations and behaviors that happen in your local community especially in families of children with disabilities
3. Describe how resource allocation and utilization is done in the Acholi context
4. Describe how roles and responsibilities are allocated to men and women, boys and girls and how the decision-making process happens in your community
5. Why in your opinion do children with disabilities engage in child labour
6. In your opinion, what relationship do you think exists between child labour and disability?
7. Describe how the social justice system is connected to child labour in your locality
8. Describe how the community perceives children with disabilities in your local community
9. In your opinion, describe what could be the connection between the way men and women, boys and girls relate and the involvement of children with disabilities in hazardous child labour in your community.
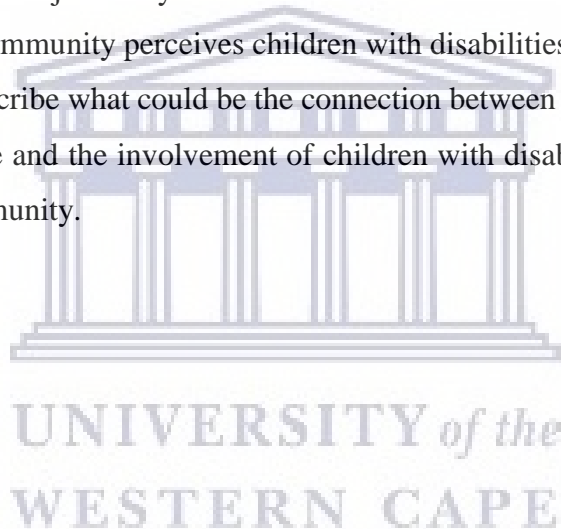
Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa*
*Telephone :(021) 959 3858/6  Fax: (021) 959 3865*
E-mail:  pkippie@uwc.ac.za

Dear Child Participants,

**Focus group interviews (FGI) Guide for a study on the synergy between gender relations, Child labour and Disability in post war Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda**

My name is Rosemary Nakijoba and I am currently studying for a PhD in Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. I am conducting a research project which seeks to establish the synergy between gender relations, child labour and disability in Post-war Northern Uganda. I would greatly appreciate it if you would participate in this study through Focus group interviews. Please be assured that the findings of this study will be used for academic purposes only. The information you give will be treated with confidentiality and your name will not be written anywhere for purposes of maintaining anonymity. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw if you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the study.

Your time and patience in discussing the questions is much appreciated.

Ms Rosemary Nakijoba                          Dr. Ina Conradie
Researcher                                              Supervisor

## GUIDELINE FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH CHILD PARTICIPANTS (KEY INFORMANTS)

1. Please share with us your understanding of the following concepts
   b) Gender relations   b) Child labour c) Disability d) Well-being e) Social justice

2. Describe some of the spousal relations and behaviors that happen in your local community

3. Describe how resource allocation and utilization is done in your families

4. Describe how roles and responsibilities are allocated to you as boys and girls and how the decision-making process happens in your families

5. Describe the factors influenced you to engage in child labour

6. In your opinion, what relationship do you think exists between child labour and disability

7. Describe how the social justice system is connected to child labour in your locality

8. Describe how the community perceives you as working children with disabilities

9. In your opinion, describe what could be the connection between the way men and women, boys and girls relate and your involvement in hazardous child labour.

## Appendix C: Interview guide question(s) for eight child participants

Dear Child Participant,

**In-depth Interview Guide for a study on the synergy between gender relations, Child labour and Disability in post war Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda**

My name is Rosemary Nakijoba and I am currently studying for a PhD in Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. I am conducting a research project which seeks to establish the synergy between gender relations, child labour and disability in Post-war Northern Uganda. I would greatly appreciate it if you would participate in this study through Focus group interviews. Please be assured that the findings of this study will be used for academic purposes only. The information you give will be treated with confidentiality and your name will not be written anywhere for purposes of maintaining anonymity. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw if you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the study.

Your time and patience in deeply answering the question (s) is much appreciated.

1. Describe your well-being in connection to the following domains

   a) Food and nutrition, b) Access to shelter c) Health d) Family support e)Community f) relations/cohesion g) Economic Opportunities h) Protection
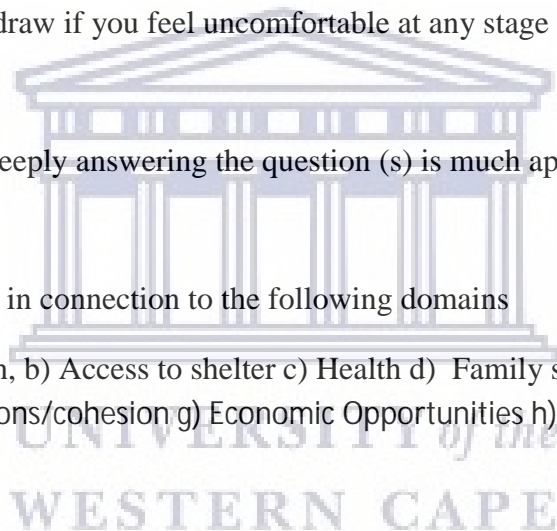
*Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa*

*Telephone :(021) 959 3858/6  Fax: (021) 959 3865*

*E-mail:  pkippie@uwc.ac.za*

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION OF A CHILD IN THE STUDY

Study title:  The synergy between Gender relations, Child Labour and Disability in Post War Acholi Sub-region of Northern Uganda

Description of the research and your child's participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Rosemary Nakijoba. The purpose of this research is to establish the synergy between Gender relations, Child labour and Disability in post war Northern Uganda. participation will involve responding to interview questions at an agreed time lasting between 45 minutes to one hour. He/she may either respond individually or in a team with other children. The interview date will be agreed upon. A convenient venue will be identified at your village and you will be notified accordingly.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research. Children will be fully protected by the research team.

Potential benefits

There are no known benefits to the child that would result from the child's participation in this research. This research may help us to understand children's perceptions on gender, child labour and disability, the work they are involved in as well as the cultural beliefs and practices related to children with disabilities in their local community.

Protection of confidentiality

The child's name will not be written anywhere on the interview forms. We will do everything we can to protect your child's privacy .Your child's identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study.

This research project involves making *audiotapes/videotapes/photographs* of the child and these may be used in the report to give clear explanation of a child's lived experience. The tapes and photos made will be kept in a locker accessible to only the researcher and the supervisor. In case you need copies, they will be availed to you. Please tick as appropriate.

___ I agree that my child is [videotaped/audiotaped/photographed] during her participation in this study.

___ I do not agree that my child is [videotaped/audiotaped/photographed] during her participation in this study.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time. Your child will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to allow your child to participate or to withdraw your child from this study.

Contact information

Should you have any questions regarding this study and the rights of your child as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems he/she have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Dr. Ina Conradie
Institute for Social Development
School of Government
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
Email:cconradie@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.
Consent: I have read this parental permission form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. By appending my signature, I give permission for my child to participate in this study.

Name of parent/guardian_____ Date: _____

Parent's/guardian's signature _____

Child's Name:_____

## Letter of consent for Interviews with Children

I………………………………………………, have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, and received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I am free not to participate and have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to explain myself.

I am aware that the information I provide in this interview might result in research which may be published, but my name may be/ not be used (circle appropriate).

I understand that my signature on this form indicates that I understand the information on the information sheet regarding the structure of the questions.

I have read the information regarding this research study on an exploration *of the synergy between Gender relations, Child Labour and Disability in Post War Acholi Sub-region of Northern Uganda* I agree to answer the questions to the best of my ability.

I understand that if I don't want my name to be used that this will be ensured by the researcher.

I may also refuse to answer any questions that I don't want to answer.

By signing this letter, I give free and informed consent to participate in this research study.

Date:………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Child's Name:………………………………………………………………………………………

Child's Signature:…………………………………………………………………………………

*Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535,*

*Cape Town, South Africa*

*Telephone:(021) 959 3858/6 Fax: (021) 959 3865*

*E-mail:* pkippie@uwc.ac.za

Letter of consent: To participate in a Focus group interviews

I..........................................................., have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, and received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I am free not to participate and have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to explain myself.

I agree not to divulge any information that was discussed in the Focus group interviews.

I am aware that the information I provide in this Focus group interviews might result in research which may be published, but my name may be/ not be used (circle appropriate).

I understand that my signature on this form indicates that I understand the information on the information sheet regarding the structure of the questions.

I have read the information regarding this research study on an exploration of the Synergy between gender relations, child labour and disability in Post War Acholi Sub-region of Northern Uganda

I agree to answer the questions to the best of my ability.

I understand that if I don't want my name to be used that this will be ensured by the researcher.

I may also refuse to answer any questions that I don't want to answer.

By signing this letter, I give free and informed consent to participate in this research study.


Date:...............................................................................................................................................

Participant's Name:.......................................................................................................................

Participant's Signature:................................................................................................................

*Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa*
*Telephone: (021) 959 3858/6 Fax: (021) 959 3865*
*E-mail:* *pkippie@uwc.ac.za*

## INFORMATION SHEET
### For
### Focus group interviews participants

**Project Title: The Synergy between Gender relations, Child Labour and Disability in Post-War Acholi Sub-region of Northern Uganda**

**What is this study about?**

This research project is being conducted by Rosemary Nakijoba, a student at the University of the Western Cape. You are invited to participate in this project as a resident of Gulu District. The study seeks to establish the Synergy between gender relations, child labour and disability in Post War Northern Uganda.

**What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

You will be asked to share information on how you perceive gender, child labour and disability, gender differences in child labour, cultural beliefs, practices and existing interventions on disability among others.

**Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

All your personal information will be kept confidential and will remain anonymous if that is your choice. You will be required to sign a consent form to protect your privacy and confidentiality while participating in this study. The researcher shall not reveal the identity of the participants and will safeguard the confidential information obtained in the course of the study.

**What are the risks of this research?**

There are no risks involved in participating in this research project. The aims and objectives will be clear from the start.

**What are the benefits of this research?**

There are no material benefits for the interviewee but it will create an awareness and understanding on the experiences of children in war affected communities related to gender, child labour and disability.

**Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate and to stop participating at any time you want. If you stop or decide not to participate, you will not lose anything.

**Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?**
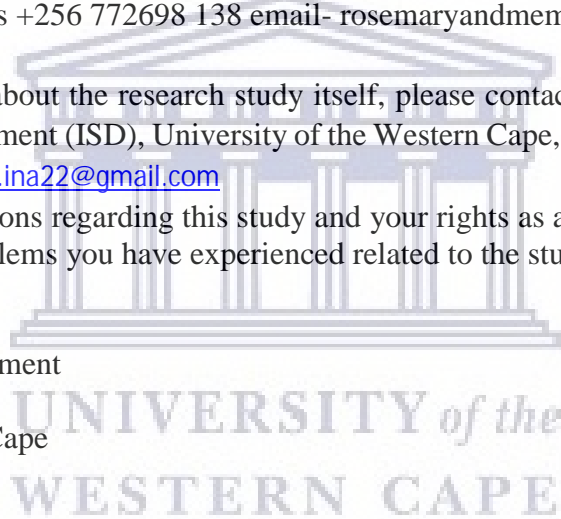There are no negative effects that could happen from participating in this study.

**What if I have questions?**
This research is being conducted by **Rosemary Nakijoba** a student at the University of the Western Cape. Her contact number is +256 772698 138 email- rosemaryandmember@yahoo.ca

If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr Ina Conradie at The Institute for Social Development (ISD), University of the Western Cape, his telephone number +**27 (021) 959 2911** email-conradie.ina22@gmail.com
Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Dr Ina Conradie
Institute for Social Development
School of Government
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
Email:cconradie@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

<u>INFORMATION SHEET</u>
<u>For</u>
<u>In-depth Interview participants</u>

**Project Title: The Synergy between Gender relations, Child labour and Disability in Post-War Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda**.

**What is this study about?**

This research project is being conducted by Rosemary Nakijoba, a student at the University of the Western Cape. You are invited to participate in this project as a resident of Gulu District. The study seeks to establish the synergy between gender relations, child labour and disability in Post-war Acholi Sub-region of Northern Uganda

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You will be asked to share information on how you perceive gender, child labour and disability, gender differences in child labour, cultural beliefs, practices and existing interventions on disability among others.

**Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

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**Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

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**Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?**
There are no negative effects that could happen from participating in this study.
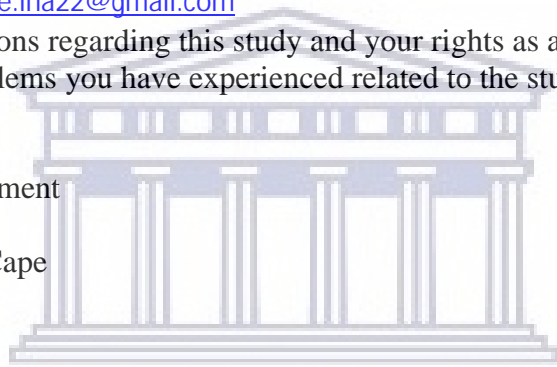

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University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
Email:cconradie@uwc.ac.za


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# Appendix F: Dissemination Plan

| ACTIVITY | CATEGORY OF PARTICIPANTS | PERIOD |
|---|---|---|
| Organise a one day dissemination workshop for study participants Nd their leaders | Parents/Caretakers, Local and cultural leaders, Staff of CSOs in Gulu and Nwoya districts | September-October 2020 |
| Hold dissemination workshop at my work place (Ndejje University) | Students and staff of Faculty of Social Sciences | Sep-Oct 2020 |
| Hold meeting with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development of  Kampala, Gulu & Nwoya | Youth and Children Department staff | October-2020 |
| Organise a one day dissemination workshop with stakeholders at National Level | Staff of organisations working with Children, Disabled people's organisations, Members of Parliament Representing Youth, Disability Representatives at National Level among others | October-2020 |
| Share /Send electronic copies of study findings to relevant institutions | Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC), National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS)<br><br>Ministry of gender, Labour and Social Development in Uganda | November,2020 |
| Prepare manuscript and submit articles to Peer- Reviewed Journals | -Journal of Disability Policy Studies<br><br>-International Journal of Social Welfare<br><br>-Children and Society journal | August- 2020- May,2021 |

## Appendix G: Letter from the editor

22 April 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby submit this letter to verify that I have duly edited the following dissertation for the degree Ph. D. in Development Studies:

THE SYNERGY BETWEEN GENDER RELATIONS, CHILD LABOUR AND DISABILITY IN THE POST-WAR ACHOLI SUB-REGION OF NORTHERN UGANDA by Rosemary Nakijoba

The onus rests however on the author to make the changes suggested and to attend to queries.

My LinkedIn page provides information about my professional profile.

Gava Kassiem

Independent Language Consultant/Academic Editor

MA (Language Practice)

Associate Member of Professional Editors' Guild

https://za.linkedin.com/in/gava-kassiem-a7569b39

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Skype ID: gavakassiem.2