

# The Voice of Peace

News and views from the areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army in Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Uganda

## Key themes:

- Departure of Congolese army, LRA not on the agenda?
- Mbororo, between the hammer and the anvil.
- Women's role in Juba peace talks

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## INSIDE: Who are the Mbororo? Why the role of women is essential in responding to the LRA conflict. Plus Amnesty law, interviews and personal stories.



## REGIONAL SITUATION REPORT June–August 2012: LRA moving back from CAR to DRC

LRA activities between June and August 2012 have occurred mainly in Bas and Haut Uélé districts in Democratic Republic of Congo and in prefectures of Mbomou, Haut Mbomou and Haute-Kotto in Central African Republic.

Most people in Bas and Haut Uélé fear that the situation might worsen after the withdrawal of most Congolese army (FARDC). However in the past weeks, there has been a noticeable decrease in LRA attacks in DRC.

In July, Mbororo herders were accused of assault, theft and the killings of 1 person in DRC and 2 in CAR. The

government of DRC responded violently to encourage their departure. This edition of *The Voice of Peace* will bring some light on this difficult issue.

In CAR, especially, in Obo, Ndjema, Mbambouti areas, there have been violent attacks and killings in the past weeks. On the 1 September, the LRA abducted 55 persons during an attack near Bangassou in CAR. A few days earlier, UPDF troops in CAR attacked an LRA convoy led by a senior LRA commander but failed to arrest him.

*Continues on p.3*

Issues	DRC			CAR			S. SUDAN			TOT
	Ju	Jul	Aug	Ju	Jul	Aug	Ju	Jul	Aug	
2012										
Attacks	23	19	12	6	3	6	0	0	0	69
Abductees	2	6	11	6	0	0	0	0	0	25
Killed	2	9	1	2	4	2	0	0	0	20
Newly displaced	100	10	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	220
Returns/rescued	2	1	2	9	0	2	1	4	5	26

## Editorial-Opinion: Father Ernest Sugule, Editor in Chief, VoP



*"Women are doing tremendous work to bring peace and joy in the LRA affected region."*

Father Ernest Sugule

The focus of this third edition of "Voice of Peace" is a regional investigation into alleged alliance between the Mbororo and the LRA. We're also explore why the role of women is essential in responding to the LRA conflict.

Mbororo are nomadic cattle herders from various countries such as Chad, Libya, Sudan, Cameroon and the Central African Republic. In some places like CAR, the Mbororo are seen as people who can help the local economy, but in others, like South Sudan and DRC, they find themselves accused by some of collaborating with the LRA.

The second focus of this edition is on women. They often bear the brunt of LRA atrocities, but they also do tremendous work to bring peace and joy

in LRA affected regions. The "Voice of Peace" wants to give credit to the heroic work women are doing towards building peace in these areas.

The third issue in this edition is the noticeable changes in the region in regard to LRA activities. In the last few weeks, the number of LRA attacks has gone down and most of the attacks are aimed at food supplies rather than senseless killing. This change may be related, in the case of DR Congo to the absence of military pressure on the LRA and therefore no retaliation against civilians.

Welcome to this third edition of "Voice of Peace" with its three key themes.

*Father Ernest Sugule is Editor-in-Chief of VoP and head of the NGO SAIPED, based in Dungu, DRC.*

## Who are the Mbororo? A special investigation



*Mbororo Peuls in Central African Republic*

The relationship between Mbororo herders and communities in the LRA affected countries (DRC, CAR, South Sudan) continues to deteriorate. In June, three people were killed in clashes between Mbororo herders and the Congolese army amid accusations the Mbororo were helping the LRA.

Based on field research and interviews with populations living alongside Mbororo in LRA affected countries, this article is an attempt to understand the causes of conflicts between the Mbororos and local population, and reflect on allegations of an alliance with the LRA in Province Orientale, DRC, Mbomou, CAR and Western Equatoria State, South Sudan.

In South Sudan, in June, an Mbororo group crossed the border from CAR to escape LRA attacks. In CAR, civil society activists have been mediating between communities and Mbororo nomads to prevent more recriminations.

Mbororo presence in Central Africa dates back to pre-colonial time but their arrival in CAR and DRC took place half a

century ago. In the past, legislation from central governments, border control and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms contained incidents between the Mbororo and the agriculturalist Zande inhabiting these areas.

However, in the past decade, instability caused by the presence of armed groups, the resulting displacements of population, in addition to unclear legislation on land tenure, and impoverishment of rural communities have increased competition over fertile land.

*Note to the reader: Due to access constraints the authors of this article could not spend sufficient time with Mbororo herders. Due to the sensitive nature of the conflict we acknowledge this paper is an attempt to share analysis on the topic but further research is needed.*

**Continued on page 6...**

## Regional situation report: continued from page1

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In general, the security situation has been relatively calm in the past few weeks in DRC because there are fewer attacks involving killings however, there are lootings, kidnappings although those abducted are released the next day. LRA activities are noticed in Garamba National Park, Bangadi and Ango areas. It is also noticed that there is currently a movement of LRA back from CAR to DRC. Why? There are two possible reasons: (i) Because of the withdrawal of FARDC, who have been sent to North Kivu therefore Haut and Bas Uélé districts have become an ideal place for the LRA to find refuge. (ii) A strategic decision from the LRA to reconstitute, restructure and regenerate.

DRC is confronted with many problems and the LRA is no longer in the agenda of the central government. The other security concern is the beginning of M23 rebellion and the withdrawal of almost all FARDC in Haut and Bas Uélé thus leaving security vacuum.

The last security concern is the tension that exists between Mbororo community and the local community of the territories of Ango and Bondo. This situation might become worse if there is no immediate solution between the two communities. Problems of Mbororo, international poachers especially in Garamba National Park are added to the complex web of problems that these two districts suffer from.

### SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan has celebrated one year without LRA attacks, looting, kidnapping and killing. This is mainly because of the good collaboration that exists between the various forces on the ground South Sudanese army (SPLA), Ugandan army (UPDF) and mostly home guards known as the Arrow Boys. People have started going back to cultivate in their villages because there is security. However there is need for trauma healing for returnees and relatives of those killed by the LRA. There is need for a community-based trauma healing programs. However, the

South Sudanese government is still concerned about the security of its citizen because as long as LRA are still in the bush and active in CAR and DRC, they may anytime cross the border and attack the peaceful civilians. That is why the government forces, arrow boys and UPDF are always on watch out.

### CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The security situation in CAR Republic is far from better despite the presence of various armies, FACA (Central African Republic army), UPDF (Ugandan army), and US advisors. There are still some attacks recorded in Mbomou, Haut Mbomou and Haute-Kotto prefectures. Of the 6576 internally displaced people registered by OCHA only 1% have returned to their villages showing that people are still afraid of returning home.

The other problem is the remoteness of the areas and lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools, etc. Unfortunately humanitarian aid is not reaching LRA affected areas. The bishop of Bangassou describes the situation as extremely worrying. All these people lack basic needs such said the bishop. According to him the base of LRA is currently Fode and Denguiro. There is urgent need to bring basic services to these people and especially repair the Obo-Bambouti road so that humanitarian aid can reach these desperate people. There are needs for trauma-healing programmes, jobs for ex-combatants, and greater cooperation between the army and civilians.

### UGANDA

The LRA is not currently active in Uganda however there are still many Ugandans in its ranks. During this period civil society in Uganda have been challenging a recent controversial change in the Amnesty law (see p5). There is still a need to promote safe defection from the LRA ranks, and to provide trauma healing for children and the community at large.

*“DRC is confronted with many problems and the LRA is no longer on the agenda of the central government”*

Ernest Sugule, religious leader and editor in chief of the VoP, Dungu, DRC.



*FARDC empty camp*

*“South Sudan has reached one year without LRA attacks, looting, kidnapping and killing”.*

Father Mark Kumbonyak, Civil society and religious leader, Yambio, South Sudan.

## Those who have tamed the waters have made an impact

Why women have a key role to play in the peace process



*Honorable Aol Betty Ocan,  
a prominent figure in the  
Juba peace talk*

*Hon. Aol Betty Ocan is a long term advocate for peace and played a pivotal role in the 2006 Juba Peace Talks. Voice of Peace caught up with her in her Gulu constituency in northern Uganda:*

**VoP:** In many aspects of society, women have been widely marginalized. How do you see their role in peace-building?

**Betty:** Although the number of women participating directly in peace-building varies, the few who have tamed the waters have made an impact. When the Hon Christine Akoro joined the Uganda Peace Talk Team, she played a big role in the Juba talks. She rallied a lot of the women to take up the cause. She transformed the women from mere observers to important participants. I believe the more women are empowered, the more they will take up these positions. Education also helps. Once you educate a girl child, you empower them in the cause.

**VoP:** For the past two decades, Northern Uganda was embroiled in a brutal civil war. Women suffered the full brunt of the violence. How did they overcome some of the challenges they faced?

**Betty:** I remember working with groups of war-affected women. Some had been rejected by their husbands because they had been raped. In the camps, divorce became the order of the day. The women became the bread winners because the men could no longer support them. Many of the men spent their days drinking. It was the women who learned the skills – like sowing seeds, in order to support their families. They dug the land, looked for things to sell and this helped their families to survive. This attitude helped to empower them and to give them a more significant role in society.

**VoP:** After the war were any structures set up to deal with the emotional and physical trauma that these women suffered?

**Betty:** The structures that were set up were done so by civil society organizations. Although the government rehabilitates the water supply, schools, and health centres, we tend to forget about the people themselves. The government was found wanting in terms of creating a structure that could deal with the emotional needs of society. Organizations like Accord, Gusco, and World Vision worked a lot on psycho-social support but as the war subsided, they pulled out. In parliament, my colleague Hon. Beatrice Lagala and I kept on appealing for some structures to be set up in the gender, labour and community development fields. Something to ensure we could support women dealing with trauma, to help sensitize and counsel them. We really needed these structures.

**VoP:** Even though the LRA is currently not active in Uganda, They are active in neighbouring countries. People in DR Congo, Central Africa and Southern Sudan are experiencing some of the suffering that we went through. Are there any words of advice that you could give to them?

**Betty:** In the first place, dialogue is the best way of ending this war. We all know that there was dialogue in Juba, but this dialogue also had its own challenges. There was a lot of mistrust. People were more concerned about money than actually doing the work. That is why the dialogue failed but I encourage these other countries to focus on dialogue. Fighting will never help.



## To love someone is to give meaning to their life

The work of the ROFU women's network in DRC

"First and foremost we want peace and security," says Wivine Ginilunga. "We want this LRA phenomenon to be finished and we want our rights to be respected."

Wivine is head of ROFU a network of women's organizations working on development and peace building in Haut and Bas Uélé districts in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This is the area of DRC most badly affected by the LRA conflict, and Wivine's network deals with the impact on a day to day basis, charting the violence and highlighting it on a national and international level.

"Can you imagine the suffering of a woman who is forced to watch helplessly

as her children are killed," Wivine says. "There is so much violence. We see cases of rape and sexual assault. Women are marginalized, their dignity affronted. All this has dire consequences."

ROFU works directly with victims of LRA violence, helping them to recover and teaching them new skills to get their lives back on track. Over the past few years more than 650 people – most of them women – have taken part in ROFU training courses learning everything from basic literacy skills to tailoring, baking and keeping livestock.

"To love someone is to give meaning to their life, to look after their wellbeing and to teach them something," says Wivine "That's why we insist on vocational training." (SAIPED, Dungu, DRC)



Wivine Ginilunga (left) and Angelique Namaika (right), two members of ROFU network, March 2012, Dungu, DRC

## Changes in the amnesty law threaten efforts to encourage return, civil society leaders warn

In the 90s, conflict-affected communities in Uganda started to make demands for an amnesty law. Despite initial reluctance from the government, the Amnesty Act was passed in 2000. Over the past 12 years, 26,000 individuals from over 25 armed groups, have abandoned insurgency, and been reintegrated into society.

On 23 May 2012, the Ugandan Minister of Internal Affairs withdrawn the amnesty provision (Part II) of the Act in a decision, which has come as a shock to conflict-affected Ugandan communities. The decision was reportedly taken without reference to Uganda's Parliament.

Without an effective amnesty, efforts to encourage defections of LRA combatants, most of whom are young people abducted from their homes, will be undermined.

In a meeting in Kampala on 12<sup>th</sup> June, a network of religious, traditional, civil society leaders – from within and outside Uganda, including neighbouring countries – reviewed the decision and issued a communiqué. The document says that the Amnesty Act has a crucial

role to play in efforts to build peace in the region and calls for its reinstatement. Consequently a petition was drawn up urging Parliament to restore the Amnesty act and to develop plans to promote reconciliation.

This petition looks at the fact that though Uganda is enjoying relative peace, the paradigms of the conflict have now shifted to other countries such as the DRC, CAR and South Sudan.

It also looks at the viewpoint that the LRA is largely comprised of abducted children and young adults forced into war without a choice. In light of all these factors, Uganda has both the moral and legal obligation to continue to employ all means necessary to isolate Joseph Kony and his commanders so as to end the enslavement and abuse of abducted children and the suffering of other communities in the DRC, CAR and Southern Sudan.

On 20 August, the petition was delivered to Parliament to be presented by Hon. Okot Ogong. This petition will ensure that the legislators will have a chance to debate the Minister's decision and shed some light on it.

*"For as long as war has existed, amnesties have been used for encouraging armed groups and combatants to abandon their fight".*

Barney Afako, Ugandan lawyer and expert on transitional justice



On May 23, 2012, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Eng. Hillary Onek (M.P) declared the Lapse of the Amnesty Act.

## Who are the Mbororo? A special investigation

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#### Origins

The Mbororo is a subgroup of the Fulani ethnic group (*Peuls* in French). Mbororo cattle-herders first arrived in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 1962. At the time, local authorities created seven rural communes for animal herders, each with a Mbororo leader.



*The best way to solve the Mbororo problem is peaceful dialogue between communities, Mbororo and various authorities*

The Mbororo Peuls of CAR come from different ethnic groups. The largest is the Djafoun, followed by the Wodabé, and the Akou. Another group called the Ouddas (Uda) arrived from Chad in the 1980s. The Ouddas initially refused to be registered and counted. They tend to be feared by the population, but also by other Mbororo groups. The Oudda group is present in northern areas, and also in the South East in Obo, Mboki and Zemio where they have been accused of collaborating with the LRA. In May 2012 for example, communities in Rafaï and Mboki blamed Mbororo Oudda for three attacks.

In DRC, the Mbororo Peuls arrived in 1982 in Ango territory in Province Orientale but were expelled by the military over allegations they were a threat to local wildlife. From 2004 onward, Mbororo groups started returning to DRC in a move facilitated by Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC). In 2010 and again in 2012, the government of DRC decided to expel Mbororos and Congolese troops sent to implement this order are alleged to have committed human right abuses.

In Western Equatoria State, South Sudan, a law was passed for the Mbororo to stay away from the state for security purpose. In 2010, the government refused a request from Mbororo to settle and the SPLA escorted them back to CAR and DRC. Those who did not comply were chased out by force.

#### Alleged alliance with the LRA

Since the end of 2008, the LRA spread into a new territory covering part of DRC, South Sudan and CAR, inhabited mostly by the Zande people and came into interaction with Mbororo herders. Community members allege that while on the move, Mbororo herders leave pathways which are sometimes used by the LRA or other armed groups across the region, raising suspicion from the population of these countries that the Mbororo are helping the LRA in their strategy to attack civilians and cause instability.

In CAR, some villages, abandoned by civilians following LRA attacks have been subsequently occupied by Mbororo groups, raising suspicions over connivance between the LRA and Mbororo groups. Though occupation of villages abandoned by their inhabitants is not a new phenomenon, especially in LRA affected areas, action is needed to prevent this situation becoming another source of conflict especially when displaced populations decide to return to villages currently occupied by the Mbororo.

#### Between the hammer and the anvil

Documentation on violence perpetrated against Mbororo herders is lacking. In DRC, herders and their families have been victims of much violence over the years, principally from FARDC units posted in Haut and Bas Uélé. According to a civil society leader, in the beginning of 2011, in Nambia, Haut Uele district, FARDC violently forced Mbororo herders out of the area, carrying out human right abuses including abduction, looting and sexual violence.

## Who are the Mbororo? A special investigation

*Continued from page 6*

In July 2012, 43 Mbororo herders crossed to Tambura County, Western Equatoria State from CAR. The State's security personnel visited them and interviewed them. The Mbororo told them the LRA abduct their young girls and slaughter their cows. Girls as young as 6 to 12 years old have been raped by the LRA. In the past 6 months, the LRA seem to have become more aggressive.

Under threat, the Mbororo are forced to provide the LRA with food and information on directions to villages and towns.

The Mbororo are asking the Tambura county authority to be given an area where they can settle their women and children while men stay in the bush with cattle. They are in need of food and medicine.

### Conclusion

It's clear that much more research is needed to understand the conflict between the Mbororo and local communities in LRA affected areas. Dialogue is urgently needed to prevent further violence and key questions and grievances on all sides need to be addressed.

Based on the interviews conducted for this article it appears that cooperation between Mbororo and the LRA is very much opportunistic and coercive. Violence, poverty and competition over scarce land resources in many rural areas across central Africa makes the presence of Mbororo herders a source of potential conflict.

Community leaders praise on-going efforts by the African Union, the UN and other NGOs to address this issue and emphasize the need to address local conflicts through dialogue and mediation.

## Regional Civil Society Task Force (RCSTF) meeting in Bangui – KEY MESSAGES

In early September civil society leaders from the LRA-affected regions met in the Central African Republic, and presented the following recommendations to the Prime Minister of CAR, members of his government, the UN Special Representative, the African Union representative and ambassadors:

**Reach out to the LRA and increase the impact of DDR** – More opportunities must be provided for abductees, rank and file fighters, and mid-level commanders to defect from the LRA's ranks and be reintegrated into their home communities. Community reception centres in northern Uganda are functional but in CAR, DRC and South Sudan these are lacking. To increase the effectiveness of ongoing efforts, international donors and national governments must support the implementation of regional agreements on legal frameworks for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes, and amnesty laws in all affected countries. Contact needs to be made with LRA groups to encourage return and diminish the LRA's capacity.

**Protect civilians** – The LRA abducts its victims where they are at their most vulnerable: in outlying areas with little infrastructure and few basic services. Safeguarding the civilians themselves is effective because it weakens the LRA by cutting off its supply of human resources and essential supplies like food and clothing. By contrast offensive military attacks against the LRA result in more retaliatory civilian casualties and, to be effective, require a greater number of troops on the ground than is feasible.

We urge national governments, the AU and the UN to make civilian protection central to all responses.

**Encourage social and economic recovery** – The LRA conflict has entrenched the poverty of vulnerable populations. To reduce their susceptibility to conflict and crises they need basic services like healthcare, education, communication and transport infrastructure, as well as livelihood opportunities. Visible peace dividends that connect people in the region must be established. Support for dialogue and reconciliation efforts can help to consolidate sustainable peace.



*"How do you encourage defection if you do not engage with them?"*

Got information to share?  
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## Returnees' Voices:

### Claude from Central African Republic

**VoP:** What do you have in your hand?

**C:** This is a notebook containing my class lessons. I also write down all the important things that have happened in my life. So it helps me to remember my past life.

**VoP:** What event can you share with us from your notebook?

**C:** I want to share with you my time with the LRA. I want to remind you that I am an LRA victim. In the space of less than two years, I was abducted three times by the LRA. In my years in the bush, I was forced progressively to get used to looting, killing and other forms of violence. Brutal killing happened every day. Killing anyone without any hesitation on the orders of the leader was the only way to survive for any length of time, to have a good position and to

be trusted in the LRA. Joseph Kony always gives responsibility to criminals to be in command of a group. Because I did what I was told, I was appointed second in command of a group of a hundred people. Finally I even replaced the one who was first in command because he was killed.

**VoP:** How did you escape?

**C:** One evening all the combat units, including mine, were meeting Kony to get new orders. After two days we were ambushed by the Ugandan army. Many people were killed and a few abductees, me included, managed to escape and save our lives.

**VoP:** What do you do for your living now?

**C:** What we do is that we make bricks and sell them. This helps us to cater for our needs and those of our families.

## About our network...

This newsletter is produced by organisations members of the Regional Civil Society Task Force, drawn from the LRA affected countries:

**ARLPI** – The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, Northern Uganda

**The Interchurch Committee**, for Western Equatoria State, South Sudan

**JUPEDEC** – Jeunesse Uni pour la Protection de l'Environnement et le développement Communautaire, CAR.

**SAIPD** – Solidarité et Assistance Intégrale aux Personnes Démunies, DRC

**CDJPR-ARU** – Diocésaine de Justice, Paix et Réconciliation, DRC,

**CR** – Conciliation Resources is an independent UK organisation working with people in conflict to prevent violence. We've been working on the LRA conflict since 1997.



*Next edition: Focus on the deployment of US advisor in the region and a summary of what happened in 2012 in LRA affected areas.*

