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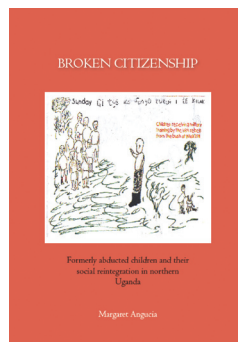
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When children are abducted the links of their citizenship get broken. These links need to be repaired in order to be socially reintegrated and become active, valuable and meaningful members of the community again. This is the approach in the thesis *Broken Citizenship. Formerly abducted children and their social reintegration in northern Uganda* by Margaret Angucia.

The thesis differs from other publications (Rivard, 2010) in that it presents the subject from the perspectives of the children themselves and from the community. The author wants to contribute to the understanding of the children's experiences of war and how the Acholi community

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was receiving them back home. She does this through using the compelling stories of children, boys and girls, abducted from their villages by the army of the Lord in northern Uganda, notably in the Acholi area and the remarks of community members made during focus group discussions. The children tell about their abduction, about their horrifying experiences, and about the atrocities they were forced to perform. These atrocities, more often than not directed on command against their own communities, are the reason why these children face difficulties and are rejected on return. Whilst abducted these children suffered from health problems, from hunger, maltreatment, lack of parental care, lack of

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schooling and on many occasions had to make a choice between saving their own life or killing others. Girls often became wives of commanders, became pregnant and got one or more children, which they had to raise under stress and in difficult circumstances. When finally returning to their village, these children came with them and the girls would find themselves in a vulnerable situation with little or no future perspectives. That meager future perspective however, is valid for the boys as well. All children suffered from mental health problems as a result of their abduction, constant threats to life, treatment and experiences.

The author builds up her thesis by firstly describing the historical and social context of the conflict in northern Uganda, followed by a discussion on children in war. In this discussion she addresses issues such as how children become part of wars, their experiences in and after war and the consequences of being involved in war. The meaning and necessity of reintegration and different approaches to reintegration are examined in the next part with an outing to the Acholi spiritual world view in order to explain the foundations of community based reintegration in the Acholi communities in northern Uganda. As social reintegration of war-affected children is seen as a long term activity embedded in the life of the community into which it occurs, the writer explains how positive citizenship is considered as a normative condition for reintegration.

The writer uses qualitative action research in data research and analysis. Part of the information consists of the above mentioned life stories of the abducted children which paint the picture of life in captivity, the constant threat to life, military training, and difficulties faced in the bush.

Then about the difficulties that peoples' children face from the bush, it is unbearable. In that when you were abducted young, they will never treat you as the young ones are being treated from home. Because if they tell you to perform any task however big it is, they will not consider your age and you must accomplish the assignment. You can even get too hungry to carry a luggage but they do not mind; they will even continue piling more and more on your head. Like on our way to Sudan there was no water, nothing like food. But in case you get tired or weak on the way, they will throw you down and just step on you; anyone who fails to walk...(Child mother, GUSCO, p. 111)

The information provided by the stories is crosschecked by among others focus group discussions with parents of war abducted children, institutional and NGO personnel and other engaged members from the community. These discussions express the difficulties faced and the fear of parents and community members when abducted children return and start living in the community again:

There is a lot of fear towards these children especially those who have been away for five to ten years. At least during their stay they might have done bad things. This is why when they return some traditional ceremonies are being performed involving even sacrificing a goat. (Focus group discussion, Alokolum IDP camp, p. 170)

The author continues with a description of formal institutional approaches to reintegration and focuses on the community based reintegration initiatives in northern Uganda, and the use, need and necessity of traditional rituals as a form of reintegration in general and especially in the Acholi communities. She describes the shortcomings of the various approaches and makes recommendations for improvement in which she addresses the lessons learnt and best practices as expressed by other authors in the field of reintegration practices for abducted children or child soldiers (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers [CSUCS], 2008; Rivard, 2010). As such she emphasizes the need for adapted education programmes and recommends to include other war affected children in the programmes, as usually all children in the community one way or the other suffered from war related experiences and including the other children will enhance their community integration and avoid privileging the war abducted ones. Where vocational

training programmes are concerned, a sound market research would be necessary in order to provide adequate skills training. The best practice of mobilization and preparation of communities as a key component of reintegration shows from the research as does the recommendation to include the children themselves in programme planning and implementation. Margaret Angucia confirms, as also concluded by CSUCS (2009) that successful reintegration is a long term exercise which for its success also depends on other long term recovery and reconstruction programmes organized from national level. The attention for the spiritual world of the Acholi and the social rituals needed to deal with "evil spirits" as a prerequisite for successful reintegration in the Acholi community, reflect the recommendation in the negotiated peace agreement "Reconciliation and Accountability", which says that local "traditional" rituals will be utilized in tandem with other approaches (Shanahan, 2008).

I think the focus of the author on the local situation with as stakeholders the children themselves, the community members, NGOs, in general civil society and the local and central government, is fully legitimate and corresponds with the opinion of the cultural relativists that childhood is "a social construction" and understanding of local conditions and dynamics that influence

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the child's experience is necessary (Rivard, 2010). Personally I would like in addition to emphasize the need for a broader approach in order to protect the rights of children and prevent recruitment, which would ask for still more national and international action as aside the established framework of international law and policy to protect children from military exploitation. The implementation of for example the Paris Principles remains a challenge (CSUCS, 2009).

The author focuses on the abducted children themselves and on the community, and their roles in the reintegration process. Though the families express their problems with the returned children in the book:

Mine is very aggressive. He is generally aggressive with me but he is very violent with his sister. On many occasions I tell his sister not to answer him. ...He is not okay in the mind. (Focus group discussion, Lacor IDP camp, p. 171)

I miss the attention for the family context in the reintegration process. From my own experience in Sudan with war affected families and children I would like to recommend assistance to the families as well, as most probably parents also suffered from war experiences and are often not able to cope with their own problems let alone to deal with the experiences and behavior of the returned children.

The approach of broken citizenship was new to me as were the quotes of the community remarks and the use of rituals for children. The quotes from the children confront the reader with the harsh reality while simultaneously providing the reason for the research. The fact that the author managed to take a distance from the confronting experiences and was able to remain the researcher is admirable.

This book is an eye-opener for anyone who would like to understand more about children's experiences to war and the reactions of the community. It also provides an overview of issues around reintegration in general and especially in the Acholi community in northern Uganda.

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