

Annex III



Report on the Ongwen Reparation Baseline Data Collection Initiative

Voices That Count

March 2025



The data collection project has been made possible by the following people and organisations:

1002 storytellers (victims of the Ongwen-led attacks on four IDP camps (2002 – 2005))

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(Photo Voices That Count)

Report on the Ongwen Reparation Baseline Data Collection Initiative

Voices That Count



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Methodology

As part of the ICC-ordered reparations process for Ongwen's crimes, the narrative inquiry approach SenseMaker was used for the baseline study to capture victims' voices and illuminate present-day challenges and needs stemming from the attacks carried out between 2002 and 2005 in four case locations (former IDP camps).

A total of 1002 stories were collected from direct victims and the next generation. This victim-centred approach combined large-scale qualitative and quantitative analysis with a stakeholder sensemaking workshop, providing input to a reparations programme grounded in lived experience and shaped by those most affected.

Summary of key insights per respondent group

- Across **Abok, Lukodi, Odek, and Pajule**, 1002 stories revealed enduring harm from Ongwen's attacks, including abductions, killings, destruction of livelihoods, psychological trauma, and family fragmentation. Individual victims most frequently expressed needs for financial support, education, healthcare, and farming inputs to rebuild their lives. At the community level, the attacks caused economic collapse, land disputes, social breakdown, and deep stigma toward returnees. Twenty years later, communities still face mental, physical, and structural wounds. Traditional community structures—such as cultural leadership, clan roles, and systems for land demarcation—dissolved during displacement, resulting in persistent conflict, weakened cohesion, and the emergence of survival-driven behaviours, including theft and violence.
- **Former Child Soldiers (FCS)** and **victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes (SGBC)** reported the most severe and lasting harm. FCS described intense psychological trauma—especially from being forced to kill—alongside rejection, stigma, physical injuries, and loss of education and land. SGBC victims endured repeated sexual violence, forced pregnancies, chronic health issues, and deep social exclusion. Many returned to find their families gone, land taken, and children stigmatised. Both groups highlighted urgent needs for mental health support, medical care, education, livelihoods, housing, and reintegration. Stigma and unresolved trauma continue to block recovery.
- The **next generation** across all four locations faces persistent harm marked by disrupted and unaffordable education, poverty, family loss, and social exclusion. Many express deep despair and uncertainty about their future. Children of former child soldiers and SGBC victims are disproportionately affected—stigmatised as “rebel children,” denied opportunities, and often raised in unstable or abusive households. Children without a recognised paternal lineage face exclusion from clan-based land rights, further deepening their marginalisation. Urgent needs include school fees, vocational training, access to land, safe housing, and psychosocial support.

Summary of main findings

Recommendations from the expert stakeholder group

Given the complexity of needs, **careful preparation**, clear messaging, and meaningful involvement of victims in the implementation of reparations are essential. **Symbolic payments** should not stand alone—they must be integrated with rehabilitation efforts to ensure a long-term impact. Mental and psychological preparation is necessary before payments begin, including financial literacy and planning support to help recipients manage their funds wisely and address family tensions surrounding distribution.

Rehabilitation should follow **a sequenced approach**: begin with trauma recovery and prioritise psychological and psychosocial support at both the individual and community levels to prepare victims to benefit from later interventions. Subsequent steps should include reducing stigma, providing physical and mental health support, facilitating community healing, offering livelihood opportunities, and ensuring memorialisation.

Key success factors include:

1. **Sensitising implementers, service providers, and communities** to focus on specific vulnerabilities of FCS, SGBC victims, and their children—to avoid re-stigmatisation or harm;
2. **Ensuring gender sensitivity**, including counselling to prevent the abuse of women recipients within patriarchal family systems;
3. **Actively engaging cultural leaders** to leverage existing social structures for community-level healing and well-being.

Recognition for the harm done

When asked what 'recognition for the harm experienced' means to victims, they described both practical and symbolic dimensions, including economic support, education, healthcare, and psychological counselling, as well as community acceptance, freedom from stigma, and family reintegration. Recognition was seen as necessary not only from institutions but also from families and communities.

Feeling of justice

Justice, in turn, was most often understood as compensation for lost property and livelihoods, as well as legal accountability for perpetrators and access to rehabilitation and sustainable livelihoods. Many also emphasized the importance of justice in terms of community reconciliation, safety, and being included in decisions that affect their future.



UN Photo/Tim McKulka

1. Background and methodology

Narrative Inquiry with Sensemaker: Centering lived experiences of victims

Dominic Ongwen, a former brigade commander in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), was indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for directing war crimes and crimes against humanity between 2002 and 2005, including attacks on internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Pajule, Odek, Lukodi, and Abok, which involved killings, abductions, looting, and sexual violence.

On February 28, 2024, the ICC issued an Order for Reparations against Mr. Ongwen, awarding collective community-based reparations focused on rehabilitation and symbolic measures for direct and indirect eligible victims. These reparations include rehabilitation programs, symbolic gestures, and cash payments.

The Trust Fund for Victims (TFV) has been tasked with drafting the Implementation Plan, outlining proposed projects, the types of harm addressed (physical, moral, material, community, transgenerational), and an estimated timeline.

The ICC emphasises victim consultations to design and implement reparations. To complement these consultations, more granular data is needed so that the implementation plan is aligned with victims' current status, experiences, and expectations, as well as serve as a baseline for assessing future progress.

To achieve this efficiently and reach a broad victim group range, SenseMaker has been identified as the most suitable tool for narrative research. This victim-centred approach places victims and their lived experiences at the heart of the process. Instead of guiding participants toward predetermined responses, it allows individuals to share personal stories in their own words—revealing how their lives continue to be shaped by the consequences of Ongwen's crimes.

In doing so, the approach offers rich insights into community perspectives, existing obstacles and opportunities, and collective aspirations, ensuring that reparations are grounded in the real and present-day needs of those most affected.

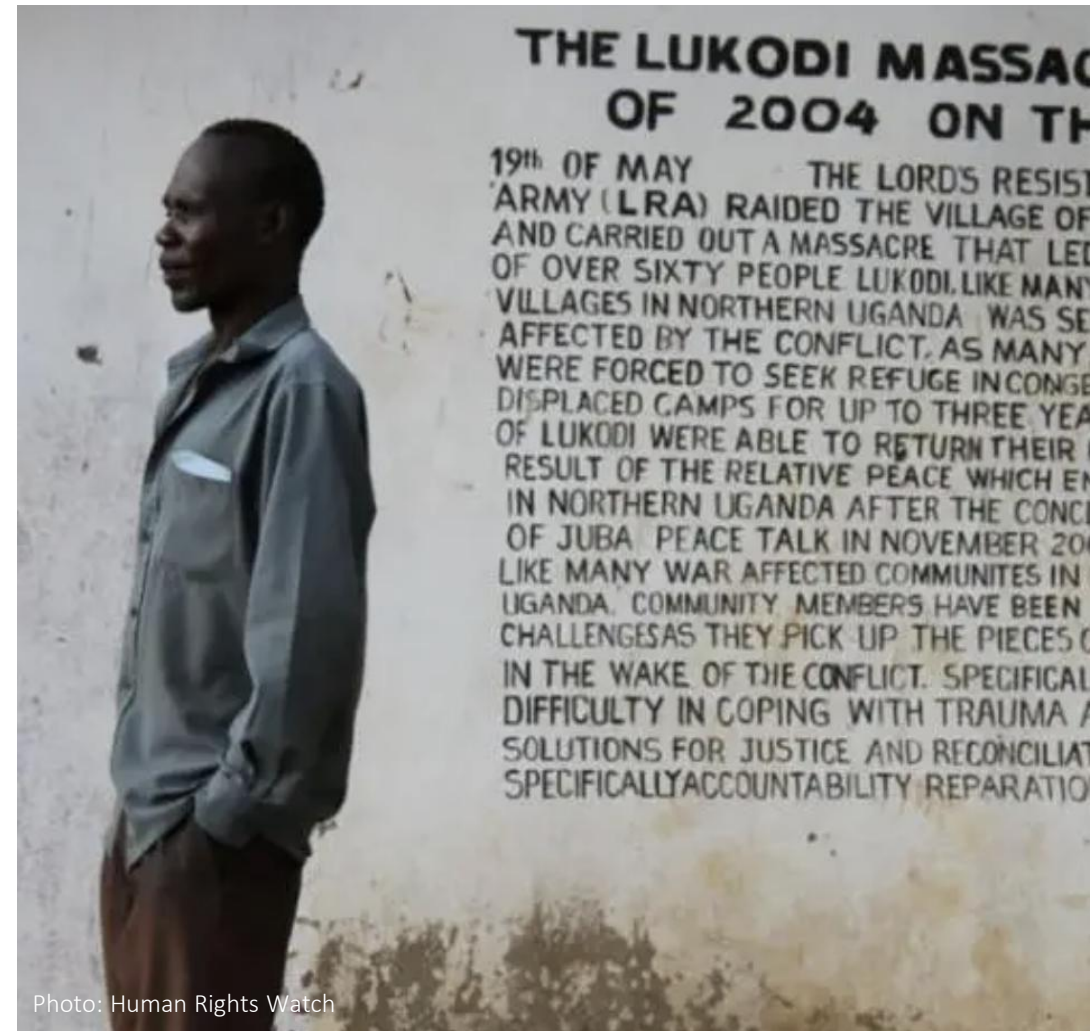


Photo: Human Rights Watch

The SenseMaker Methodology

Narrative Inquiry with SenseMaker is an innovative, story-based methodology for action research, needs assessment, monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making. It is designed to help generate actionable ideas and guide interventions within complex systems and processes. It enables decision-makers to 'see the world' through the eyes of their citizens, beneficiaries, partners, or collaborators.

It is based on the compilation of many micro-stories (hundreds or even thousands) to obtain multiple experiences around a subject of interest, in this case, how the awarded collective community-based reparations could be implemented by the Trust Fund for Victims and its implementing partners in Uganda.

After the story has been shared, a well-designed set of follow-up questions invites people to interpret their experiences and their stories themselves. This 'self-signification' process reduces the external researcher's bias during analysis and shifts the power of interpretation to the respondent, rather than the external expert.

In this way, the SenseMaker methodology goes beyond conventional qualitative approaches, which rely on the interpretation of researchers. SenseMaker recognises that when people who share their experiences are allowed to analyse and make sense of their own stories, they produce more contextualised knowledge and reliable information. All stories and answers to the questions are digitalised using the SenseMaker software and can be used to extract patterns and conduct quantitative analysis. This method does not favour dominant voices above others. Every voice and every story holds the same weight in the visualisation and analysis emerging from patterns and trends. It is, therefore, an ideal method for giving equal voice to those who are often unheard. Inviting people to share a story is a powerful way to acknowledge a person, to listen, and to recognise.

Do you want to learn more about SenseMaker?
Contact steff@voicesthatcount.net
www.voicesthatcount.net

Narrative Inquiry tool

The Narrative Inquiry tool was developed and designed with the project steering. It is framed around **three prompt questions** inquiring about the effects/impact of Ongwen's crimes on the life of victims, individual needs of victims for rehabilitation and needs and recommendations for reparation and healing at the community level.

A set of **follow-up questions** for each prompt question allows the storytellers to provide additional meaning to their own story.

In addition, further questions were asked to investigate how victims perceive the meaning of '**recognition for the harm done**' and the meaning of '**justice**'.

Analysis

The analysis was conducted in two complementary phases:

- **Initial desk analysis:** Key emergent patterns were identified across the collected stories, highlighting common themes of harm, needs, and aspirations.
- **Participatory stakeholder expert workshop:** A diverse group—including story collectors, academics, cultural leaders, NGO and psychosocial workers, implementing partners, and representatives from the Trust Fund for Victims at the International Criminal Court—reviewed and contextualised the data. This participatory process added interpretive depth, surfaced additional meanings, and collaboratively identified key implications for the design of a successful reparation programme.

"10/10/2003, LRA rebels attacked our camp in Pajule. That fateful day, I was abducted together with my elder brother who was killed in my present. I was brutally tortured and forced to carry heavy load of goods looted from the camp on my head and I covered long distances while carrying those items. I remember, I was just only 15 years old and they forcefully recruited me to join the rebels where they tasked me to kill one person in order to be a fully registered soldier of the LRA. After 3 years in the LRA captivity, I escaped and came back home. When I reached home, I saw a grave which I was told belongs to my father. The rebels killed my father when I was abducted. When I reached home, I received a lot of discrimination from the community members referring me as a "rebel". Currently, I live with pain on my back as a result of carrying heavy loads and torture inflicted on my body. I still have the trauma of seeing dead bodies which sometimes make me tremble at night. I feel that my life is full of grief and annoyance every time I reflect on the difficulties I am facing since the abduction also made me to drop out of school."

"I was abducted by Ongwen's Sinia Brigade in 2004 from the Odek Internally Displaced Persons camp. I was forced into sexual slavery and made to marry a notorious rebel commander against my will—he took my virginity. I spent four years in captivity until I escaped in 2008 while pregnant.

During my time in the bush, I endured several battles and still have bullets lodged in my left knee. The pain often becomes unbearable, sometimes leaving me paralyzed, especially in cold weather.

I now have six children from different fathers, a consequence of the stigma that labels me a rebel and a killer. Many of the men I married rejected or divorced me because of this. I now live alone with my children and have no desire for another relationship.

My abduction shattered my education, leaving me without hope for the future. I have also been denied access to land simply because I am a woman. This has made it impossible to farm and support my household, forcing me to take casual labor in other people's gardens just to meet our basic needs.

What pains me most is that I cannot afford to send my children to school."

"I don't have much background on what has happened. I tried to ask my mum, but she does not give a clear answer; sometimes, she just responds with tears. My peers call me a son of a rebel, which makes me always fight those who insult me, causing me to lose friends. I stay in isolation, fearing insults and discrimination from other children. As a result, I have not gone to school, which has darkened my future since I will not be able to get a formal paid job to support my family, pay school fees, buy food, or afford medical bills. I don't have paternal land to settle on or land to farm, which causes us to face famine every year. I am facing stigmatization from my peers as they always remark that I am a rebel son born from the bush, which affects my right to association, making me withdraw in fear of being insulted."

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UN Photo/Tim McKulka

1002 stories

2. Who shared stories?

Type of respondent groups

The Narrative Inquiry baseline study focused on four type of respondent groups

Victims in the 4 locations, who endured Ongwen's attacks on 4 IDP camps

Civilians who were present during the attacks by Dominic Ongwen's Sinia Brigade on four former IDP camps—Abok (June 8, 2004), Lukodi (May 19, 2004), Odek (April 29, 2004), and Pajule (October 10, 2003); suffering killings, mutilations, sexual violence, looting, and destruction of property.

Former Child Soldiers (FCS)

Men whom the Sinia Brigade abducted during the attacks on former IDP camps—Abok, Lukodi, Odek, and Pajule—at age 15 or below; and forcibly conscripted into the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). They were subjected to military training and forced participation in attacks. This study aimed to focus on FCS victims who, as returnees, were unable to go back to their ancestral homes.

Victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes (SGBC)

Women abducted by the Sinia Brigade from four former IDP camps—Abok, Lukodi, Odek, and Pajule who were subjected to rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, or enslavement. This study aimed to focus on SGBC victims who, as returnees, were unable to go back to their ancestral homes.

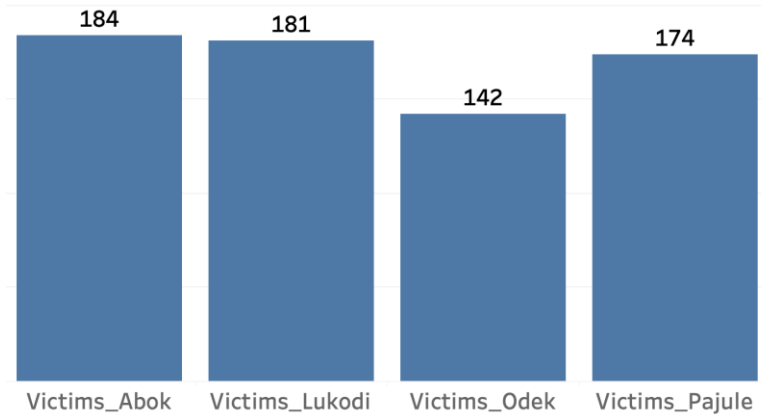
Next Generation Victims

Individuals born after the attacks on Abok, Lukodi, Odek, and Pajule, who suffer the long-term consequences of the crimes committed. This group encompasses three subgroups:

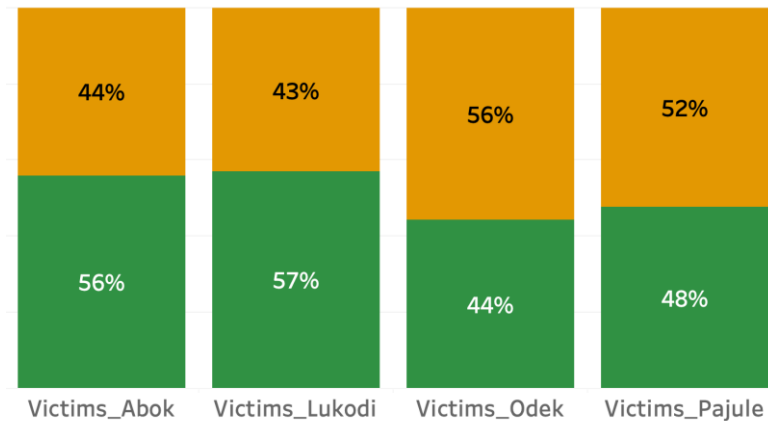
- Children of victims in 4 locations
- Children of Former Child Soldiers
- Children of SGBC victims

Who shared a story?

Storytellers from the 4 locations

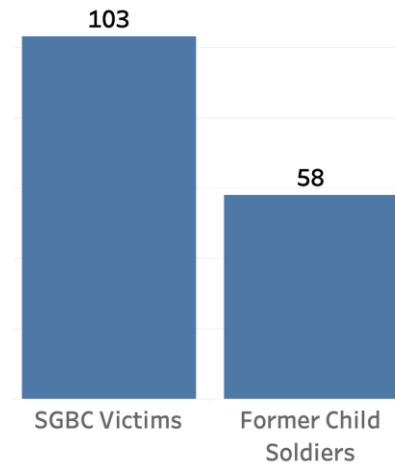


Gender

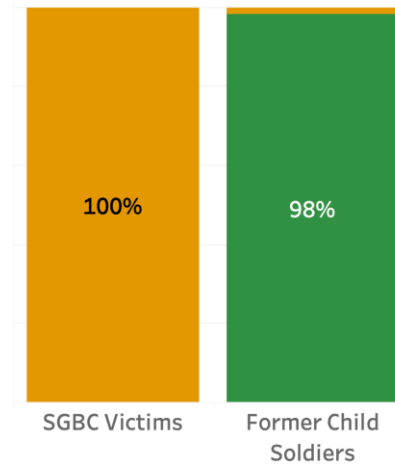


female
male

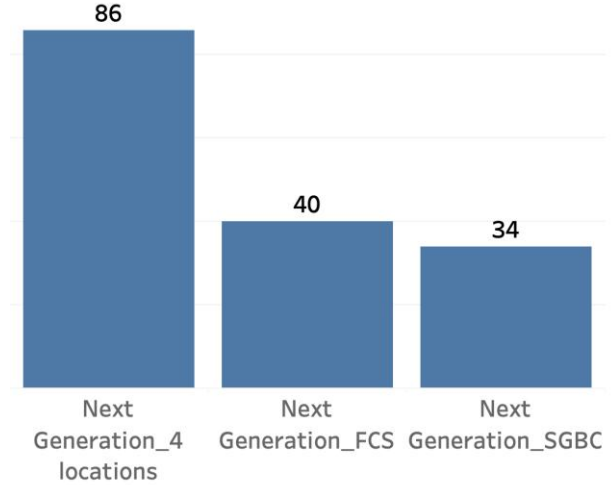
Thematic victims



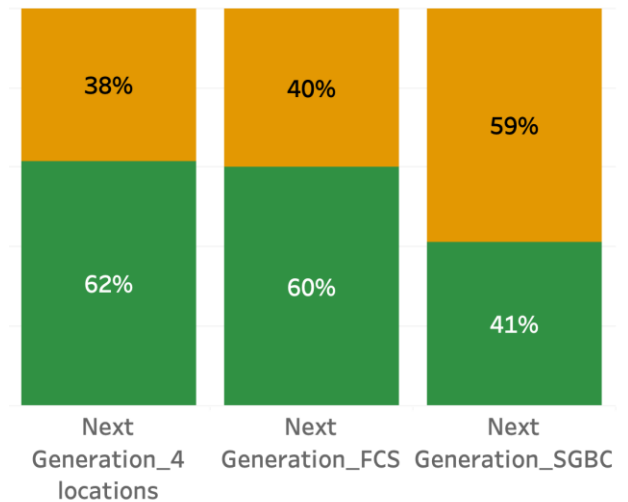
Gender



Next generation

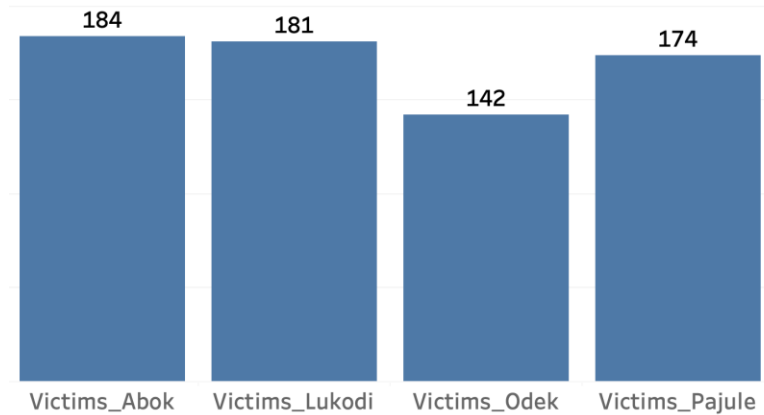


Gender

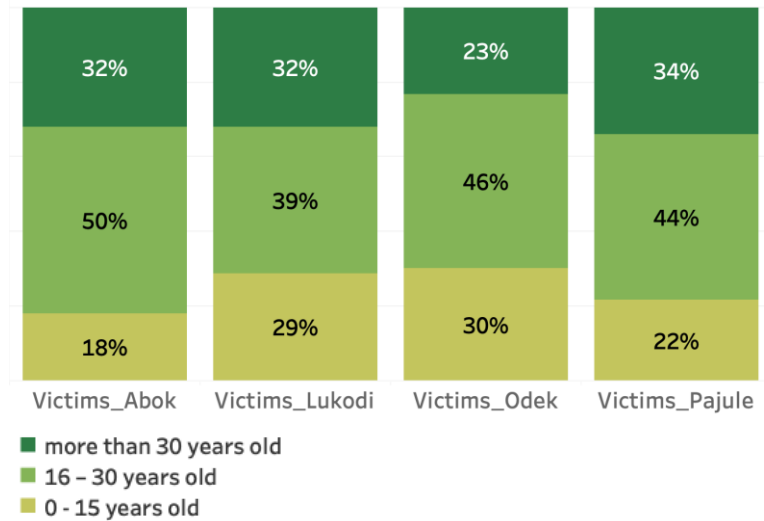


Who shared a story?

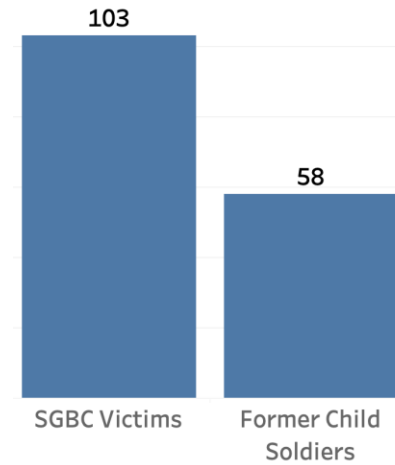
Storytellers from 4 locations



Age during incident



Thematic victims (scattered)



Age during incident

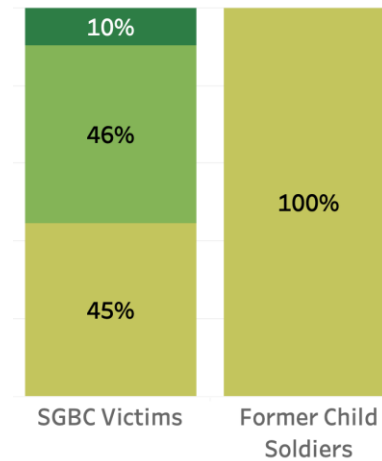




Photo AP: Karel Prinsloo

3. Pattern analysis of stories from victims



Fonds au Profit des Victimes
The Trust Fund for Victims



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3.1 Victims in the 4 locations who directly experienced Ongwen's attacks

Victims from Abok, Lukodi, Odek, and Pajule

Tel ba (It's really hard)

It was a terrible time of our lives. Sleeping unaware of the worst to happen, I heard gunshots and decided to get out of my hut. Seeing huts being set on fire, I rushed to pick my 5-year-old son. As I escaped, there was an incomplete latrine where my son slid and fell in the hole. That's when the rebels abducted me and raped me. After, they told me to go and rescue my son. I found my son had cried for long and picked him up. It was unfortunate that he died on my back immediately I carried him.

I never had a chance to give my son a decent burial since I had to leave his corpse behind. This makes me blame myself for having not carried him home. I feel I'm a bad mother and I believe that all the current misfortunes are due to this. I get lost in thoughts and feel dirty and embarrassed about the sexual abuse that I went through. My back and knees pain up to date and no proper treatment has been provided. Whenever I go to hospital, I fear to reveal the cause of my pains not to be stigmatised. Crying is all I do since I have no one I trust in the community to share my story with. I avoid people since I fear to get involved in conflicts. I don't have anyone to run to in case of any misunderstanding since I lost all my children during the war and I'm left with my grandchildren with no one to support them with basic needs. They need to work in people's gardens to earn a living, and this has affected their performance in school since they don't fully attend as they need to earn a living as well. I feel the community looks at me like an outcast due to the total poverty I live in. But I pray that one day my elder grandson comes to our rescue.

Killing people

I personally witnessed the attack and sadly saw people being killed. I couldn't stand it. Young girls and boys were abducted and taken. Some of these were relatives and friends. Our animals—goats, chicken—and household items were destroyed and others taken. We remained with nothing. We were able to take care of our needs without begging before the attack, but that changed after the attack.

I escaped with my husband and 6 children and went to live a helpless life in the camp in Gulu. Camp life was so demeaning, no privacy at all. I shared a very small room with all my children. I couldn't have intimacy with my husband in the presence of my children. The war ended, we came back home and began a totally new life. The attack has never gone off my mind and I have lived in fear all this while. My prayer is that there should never be a reoccurrence of such acts. We should be left to stay in peace even if there is too much suffering. We would rather stay without medical care or no money as it is now, but have peace. I have now become of age and I do not have the energy. I am sickly but with no proper treatment. I know one day I am going to die, but what I pray for is a better future for my children and grandchildren.

Destroyed life that I am living

I don't really remember the exact time and date when the attack took place, but it was in 2004. The rebels came and started firing bullets in the camp, and they killed most of the old people, looted items like food crops and animals that were around the camp, and they abducted very many people from the camp, including me and others, to help them carry loads to the bush. They tortured us while saying that if anyone tries to escape, he or she would be killed—and indeed those who tried to escape were killed as an example to others. After a year we were made soldiers.

Since I came back from the bush, I have failed to get another woman to marry because I keep saying that if I marry, I will end up killing the person with the spirit of the dead that I killed while in the bush. The injuries I got from the bush in the hands of the—and the torture—has made me weak and unable to perform much work to get money to support me in buying food for myself. I miss my family because my wife left when I was abducted, and the time I took in the bush made me a beggar in the community. I can't hear well these days because when I was there, they used to put the gun on my shoulder and fire, and that sound spoiled my ear.

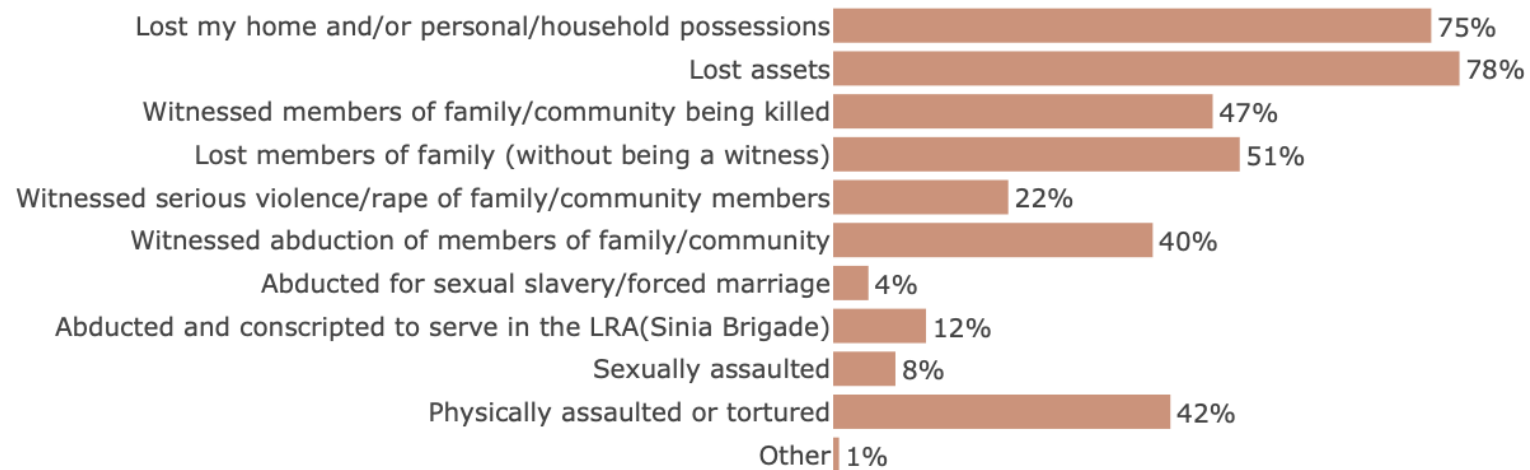
Inheriting family's responsibilities as a result of the attack

On October 10, 2003, the rebels attacked Pajule camp. I was 27 years old at the time. We were sleeping when we were suddenly woken up by gunshots. I ran and managed to escape without being abducted. My father was killed, and my mother fell and broke her leg while trying to run. All our houses were burned down, along with everything inside. My father had more than 20 cattle and 30 goats, all of which were stolen. One of my younger brothers was injured by metallic fragments from a bomb explosion, which continues to affect him, preventing him from living a normal life.

As the eldest son, I took on the responsibility of caring for my family. I am now looking after my mother, who is disabled and relies on a walking stick, as well as my four siblings and my five children. The overwhelming responsibilities at a young age forced me to drop out of school. Financial difficulties make it impossible for me to afford school fees for all the children. We rely mainly on farming for survival.

Nature of harm experienced during attacks

What did the storyteller experience during the incident(s)?



All respondents from the 4 locations

We see a similar pattern of harm suffered across female and male victims, except that for **female victims**, there are, not surprisingly, **more abduction for sexual slavery/forced marriage** and more cases where female victims were **sexually assaulted**.

There are **similar patterns** across the different locations in terms of the harm suffered.

The main difference can be seen in:

- **Pajule:** There are significantly more stories about witnessing people being killed (63%), witnessing the abduction of family members (62%), and being physically assaulted or tortured (62%)
- **Odek:** There is a higher percentage of people that are sexually assaulted (15%)
- **Abok and Odek:** More young people were abducted to serve in the Sinia Brigade (16%)
- **Lukodi:** Significantly fewer people were physically assaulted or tortured (14%)

Impact of the attacks on victims' lives today

Summary of the key impacts shared in the stories

Abok

- 1. Economic Devastation and Persistent Poverty:** The attack caused immediate and lasting economic devastation through the destruction or theft of homes, livestock (especially cattle and oxen, which are vital for farming), and food stores. This devastation has trapped families in a cycle of poverty years after the attack, preventing recovery and limiting future prospects.
- 2. Psychological Trauma and Mental Health Impact:** Victims experience severe, persistent psychological distress, including flashbacks, nightmares, and intrusive memories of witnessing killings, experiencing torture, or being forced to commit violence. These mental health challenges continue to interfere with daily functioning, relationships, and recovery.
- 3. Abduction and Forced Participation in Violence:** Many victims were abducted and forced to commit extreme acts of violence, including killing family members or civilians, causing profound guilt and nightmares that continue to haunt them years later, often resulting in their isolation from communities.
- 4. Family Fragmentation and Loss:** The killing, abduction, and disappearance of family members have destroyed family structures, leaving behind orphans, widows, and broken households with devastating emotional and economic consequences that continue years after the attack.
- 5. Social Stigmatization and Community Breakdown:** Returnees from abduction face intense stigmatisation within their communities, being labeled as "rebels" or "killers," while community bonds have deteriorated through land disputes, mistrust, and competing claims to scarce resources, creating additional barriers to healing and recovery.

Lukodi

- 1. Economic Devastation and Persistent Poverty:** The attack caused immediate and long-term poverty through the destruction of assets (livestock, crops, homes), leading to the inability to pay for education, healthcare, or rebuild livelihoods, creating a cycle of poverty that continues years later.
- 2. Psychological Trauma and Mental Health Impact:** Victims experience persistent mental health challenges including flashbacks, nightmares, depression, and trauma from witnessing violence, losing loved ones, and experiencing abduction or assault, with limited access to psychological support.
- 3. Physical Injuries and Disability:** Many victims suffer from enduring physical injuries from gunshots, beatings, and forced labor during the attack or captivity, resulting in chronic pain, disability, and reduced capacity to work or support families.
- 4. Family Fragmentation and Caregiver Burden:** The attack destroyed family structures through deaths, abductions, and displacement, creating orphans and placing heavy burdens on surviving family members to care for dependents while coping with their own trauma and poverty.
- 5. Land Conflicts and Property Disputes:** Upon return from displacement, many victims faced land grabbing and boundary disputes due to the death of elders who knew traditional boundaries, creating new sources of conflict, violence, and economic hardship within communities.

Impact on the life of victims in 4 locations

Summary of the key impacts shared in the stories

Odek

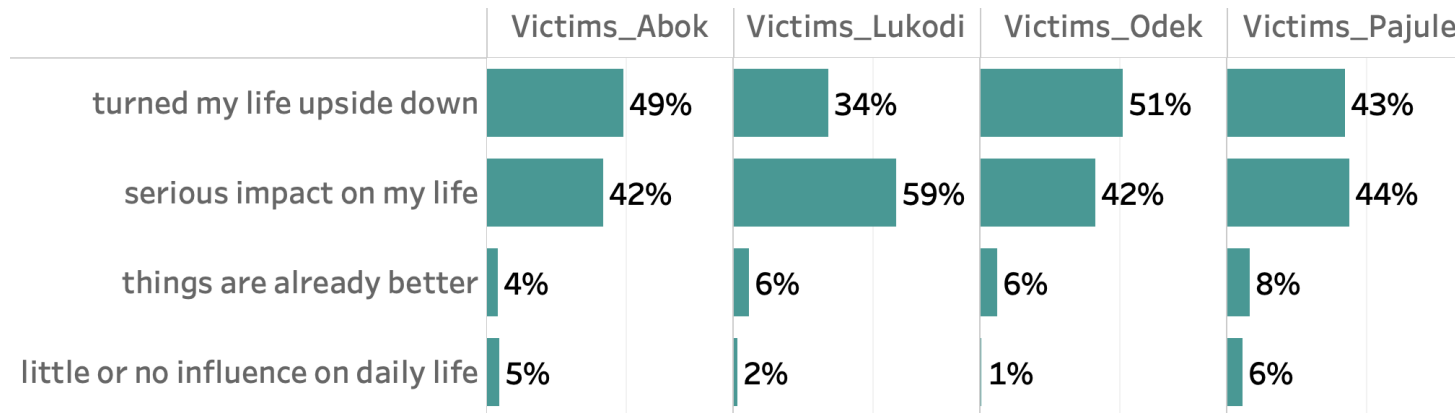
- 1. Economic Devastation and Persistent Poverty:** The attacks resulted in widespread loss of property, livestock, farmland, and livelihood sources, creating enduring poverty that continues to affect victims' ability to meet basic needs, support their families, and rebuild their lives years after the events.
- 2. Physical Injuries and Long-term Health Consequences:** Victims suffer from persistent physical injuries, disabilities, and chronic health conditions from gunshot wounds, torture, carrying heavy loads, and inadequate medical care, severely limiting their ability to work, earn income, and perform daily activities.
- 3. Psychological Trauma and Mental Health Issues:** Victims continue to experience severe psychological trauma manifesting as flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety, depression, and fear, significantly affecting their mental health, relationships, ability to work, and overall quality of life.
- 4. Land Conflicts and Dispossession:** Following displacement, many victims returned to find their ancestral lands grabbed by relatives or neighbours, creating ongoing disputes, homelessness, and tensions within families and communities that further exacerbate economic hardship and prevent recovery.
- 5. Disrupted Education and Limited Opportunities:** The conflict severely interrupted educational opportunities for both direct victims and their children, creating cycles of limited job prospects and poverty due to school disruptions, inability to pay school fees, and loss of educational infrastructure.

Pajule

- 1. Economic Devastation and Persistent Poverty:** The attacks led to widespread loss of livelihood assets (particularly livestock and land), creating enduring poverty that persists years after the attacks, affecting victims' ability to meet basic needs, educate children, and rebuild their lives.
- 2. Physical Injuries and Disability:** Victims suffer from long-term physical injuries and disabilities from torture, violence, and being forced to carry heavy loads, limiting their ability to work and support themselves and creating ongoing medical needs.
- 3. Family Fragmentation and New Caregiving Burdens:** The attacks resulted in widespread deaths and abductions, leaving victims—especially women—with additional responsibilities caring for orphaned children, elderly parents, or siblings, often without supportive family structures.
- 4. Psychological Trauma and Mental Health Issues:** Victims experience severe and persistent psychological trauma from witnessing brutal killings and experiencing violence, manifesting as nightmares, flashbacks, grief, depression, and suicidal thoughts that continue years after the attacks.
- 5. Land Conflicts and Dispossession:** Following displacement, many victims—particularly widows, orphans, and those who lost male family members—faced land-grabbing by relatives or neighbours, exacerbating economic hardships and creating ongoing conflicts within families and communities.

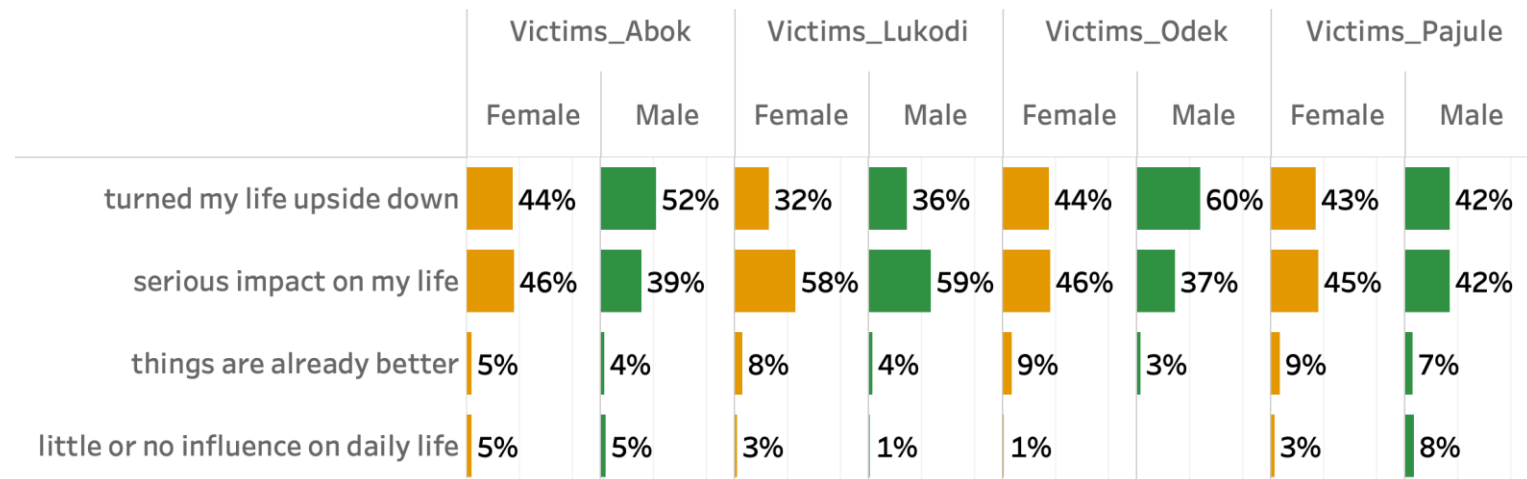
Impact on the life of victims in 4 locations

The harm suffered during the attacks ...



Overall we can state that the impact on people's life is still very high. Victims from Lukodi who were part of this study seem to feel the least impact compared to the other locations

In Abok and Odek, male victims reported more impact than female victims.



Impact on the life of victims in 4 locations

The changes I have just described in my story mainly affect...



All respondents from the 4 locations

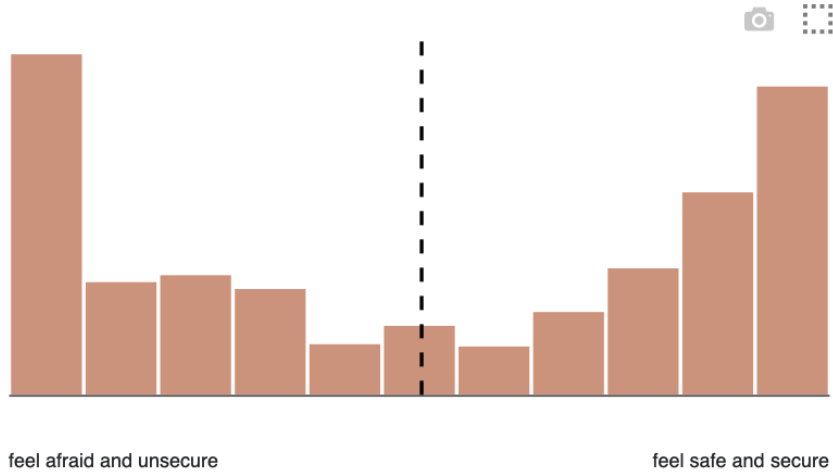
Overall, we see that the impact on people's lives is relatively equally distributed across physical, emotional and economic well-being.

- In **Odek**, we see more impact on the **physical** and, partly, **economic well-being**.
- In **Lukodi**, victims appear to experience a greater impact on their **economic well-being**.

There are significant differences between male and female victims, **except that male victims in Odek and Lukodi feel more impact on their economic well-being than female victims.**

Impact on people's life: Feeling of security and acceptance in the community?

Based on what I shared in my story, I

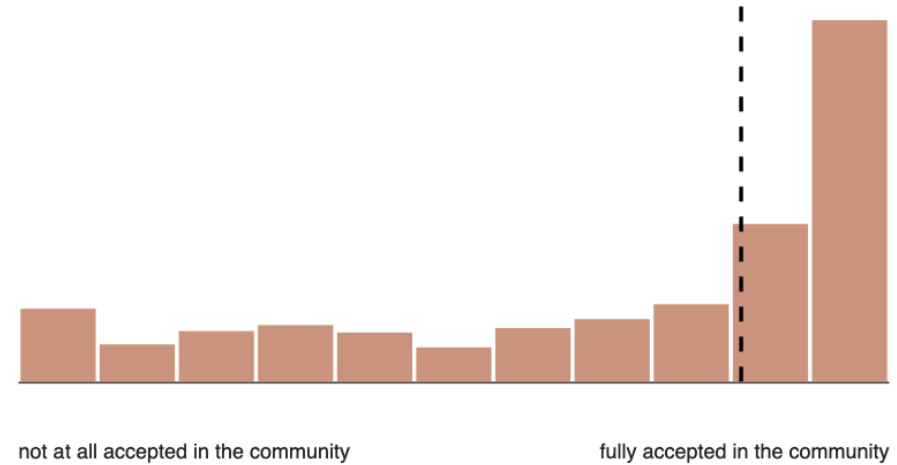


All respondents from the 4 locations

There are clearly two different groups in each of the locations. People that feel safe and secure and an equal number of people that feel afraid and insecure.

Comparing 4 locations, we see that people in Pajule feel slightly more safe and secure, while people in Abok seem to feel less safe

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...



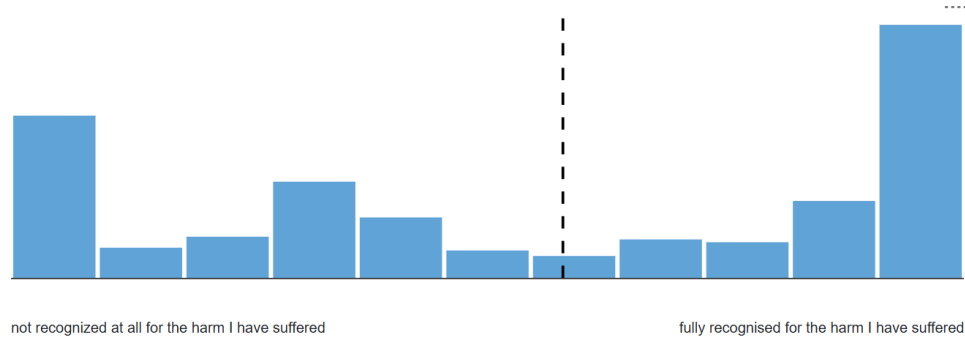
All respondents from the 4 locations

In all locations, the majority feels accepted in the community.

In Pajule people seem to feel most accepted.

Feeling recognised for the harm suffered?

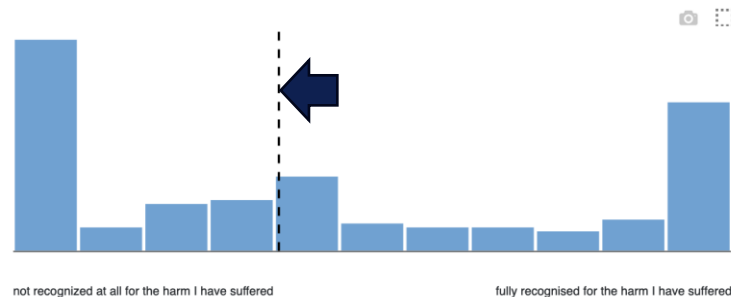
Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...



All respondents from the 4 locations

In Abok, Odek, and Lukodi, the majority of victims tend to feel recognised for the harm they suffered.

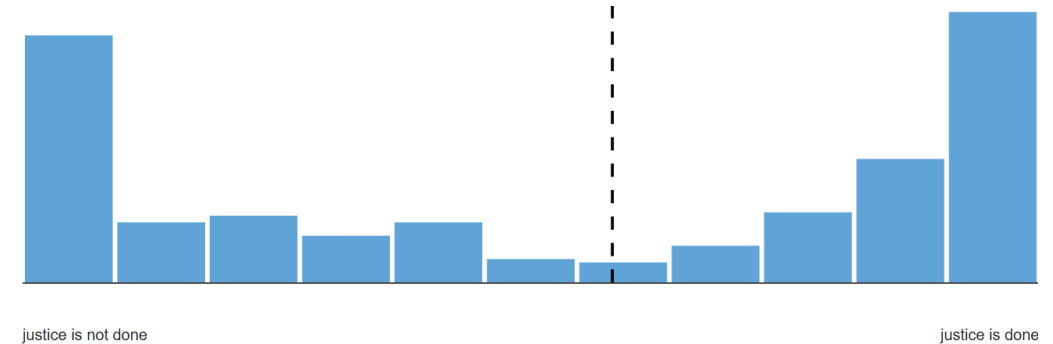
In **Pajule**, however, most people feel they have not been recognised for the harm suffered.



Respondents in Pajule

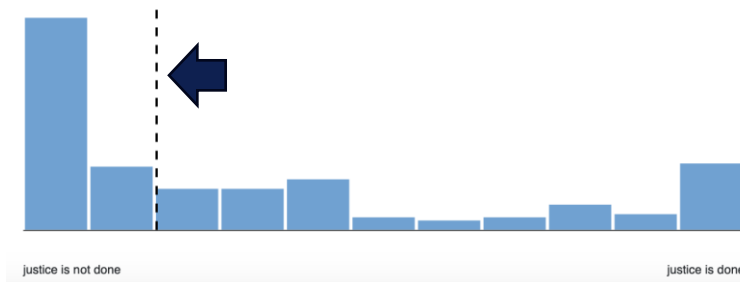
Justice done?

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel that for me...



All respondents from the 4 locations

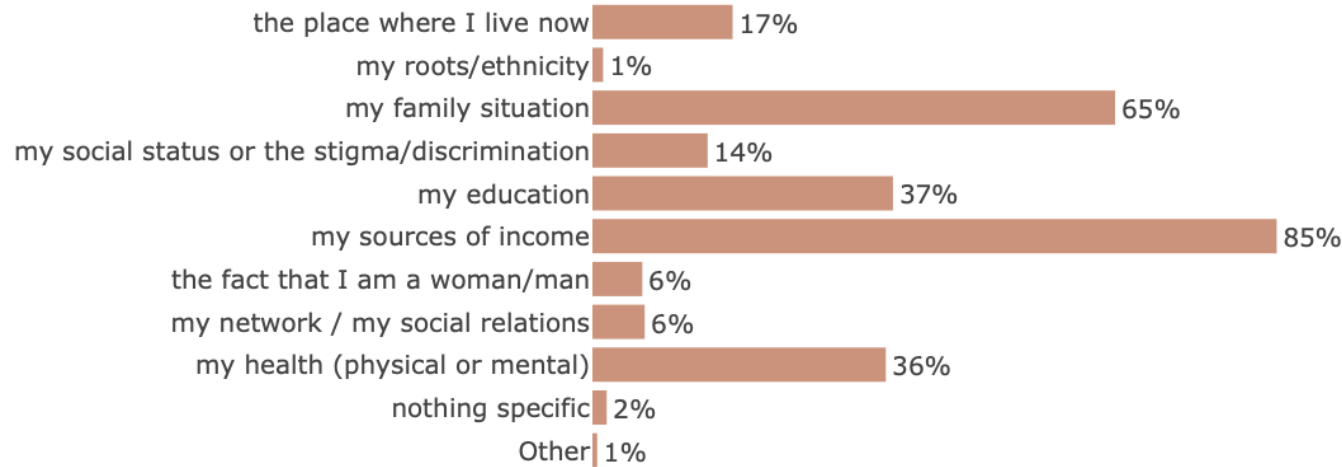
In Abok, Odek, and Lukodi, the majority of victims tend to feel that justice has been served, while Pajule stands out with a clear indication that people don't feel that justice has been done.



Respondents in Pajule

What prevents victims from healing and moving forward in life?

What prevents me from healing and moving forward in life?



All respondents from the 4 locations

Among the victims from the 4 locations, both male and female victims refer to their **source of income (+80%)**, their **family situation (+60%)** and their **health (+35%)** as the main reasons for not healing or moving on in life.

- **Male victims** refer more to **education** compared to females (45% vs 29%).
- **Female victims** focus more on **gender-related issues** (the fact that they are a woman).

The most significant barriers are relatively consistent across all locations:

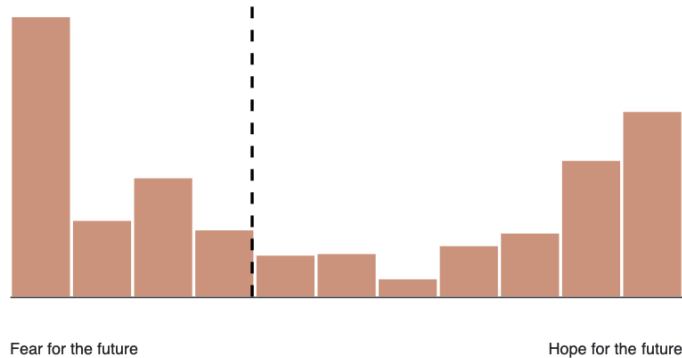
- **Income** presents the highest barrier in all locations, with **Pajule (95%)** and **Odek (89%)** reporting the highest impact, followed by
- **family situation** - especially in **Pajule (74%)** and **Lukodi (69%)**; and
- **Health (physical or mental)**, especially in **Odek (49%)** and **Abok (41%)**.

Specifics per location:

- **Abok** stands out in that the place where people live now is a barrier for almost a third of respondents.
- **Lukodi** sees **education (49%)** as a more significant barrier than in other locations.
- Almost 50% of Odek respondents view **health (both mental and physical)** as a significant barrier – more than in other locations.
- **Pajule** reports more substantial barriers than other locations, with the two significant barriers — income and family situations — being more heavily represented than in other locations, as are social status/discrimination and gender.

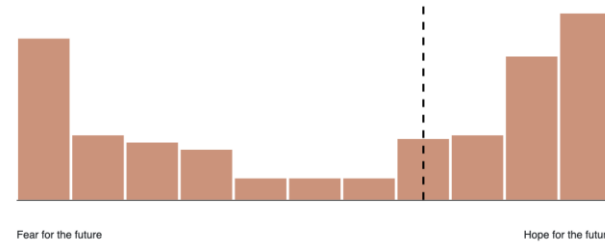
Perception about the future: fear or hope?

How do I feel about the future?

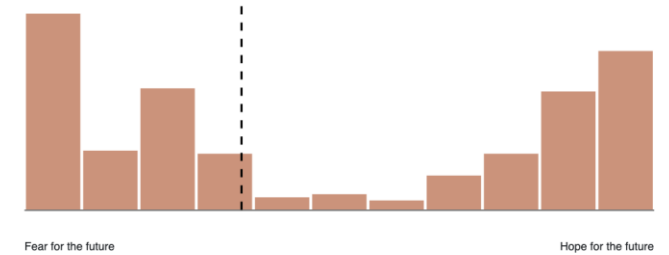


Gender perspective

How do I feel about the future?



Female victims in Lukodi, Abok and Odek

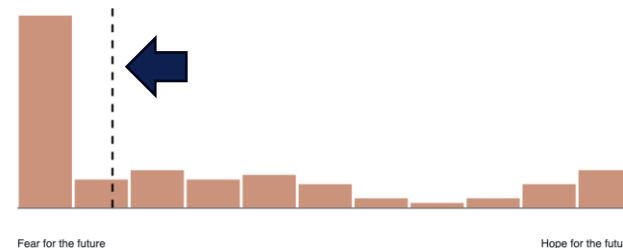


Male victims in Lukodi, Abok and Odek

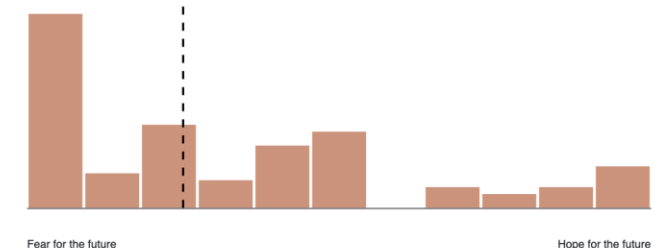
In **Abok, Odek and Lukodi**, there is an equal division between people who fear for the future and some who are hopeful about the future.

Except in **Pajule**, more people are more negative and fearful of the future. The main reasons found in the stories are:

1. Inability to educate children
2. Physical disabilities & health issues
3. Land issues & property loss
4. Elderly parents worry about who will care for them
5. Many are caring for orphaned children with limited resources
6. Lack of stable income sources



Female victims in Pajule



Male victims in Pajule

- In **Abok, Odek and Lukodi** male victims fear for the future, and female victims have much more hope for the future.
- In **Pajule**, male and female victims fear for the future.

Individual/family needs to heal and rebuild lives

What needs to be fixed or improved for you and your family to heal and rebuild your lives after the harm caused by the attacks?

Stories reveal that the victims in the 4 locations mention similar needs for healing and rebuilding their lives; however, there are different priorities across the 4 locations.

Need Category	ODEK	LUKODI	ABOK	PAJULE
Financial Support/Capital	69%	56%	61%	61%
Education Support	59%	54%	54%	48%
Agricultural Support	55%	46%	46%	34%
Housing/Shelter	50%	35%	39%	32%
Medical/Health Care	32%	23%	22%	17%
Land Acquisition	29%	19%	21%	25%
Livestock Support	26%	52%	48%	42%
Mental Health Support	24%	26%	16%	12%
Business Support	22%	26%	20%	45%

% of respondents that refer to a specific need (for each location)

- Overall, **financial support (61-69%)** is the most common need across all locations, followed by **education (48-59%)** and **agricultural/livestock support (34-55%)**, indicating a strong focus on economic recovery.
- Medical care (17-32%)** and **mental health support (12-26%)** are present but consistently lower in priority.

Differences between the locations

- Odek prioritises **financial support (69%)** and **education (59%)** to a higher degree than any other location.
- Lukodi has the highest need (of 4 locations) for **livestock support (52%)**.
- Abok follows the overall pattern (similar across 4 locations); with more than 40% of people mentioning **financial, education, livestock and agricultural support**.
- Pajule emphasizes all kinds of economic empowerment (**financial, business, livestock**); as well as **education support**.

We see that across the 4 locations, victims mainly depend on **external support** for their individual needs. In Odek and Lukodi, there appears to be a slightly greater sense of agency in dealing with their own needs.

Overview of the individual needs for healing and rebuilding life (across the 4 locations)

- **Financial assistance** is primarily focused on helping people recover from war losses through direct cash support. Families need money for daily survival, including household expenses and emergency medical costs. This includes funds to help rebuild their lives, replace lost belongings, and ensure their children can go to school. The support is meant to help households stay afloat and eventually become financially stable again, while also providing means to invest in land or construction materials when needed.
- **Education support** encompasses both immediate and long-term learning needs. Communities need help covering school fees, getting basic supplies like uniforms and books, and ensuring kids have a way to get to school. The support extends to providing food at schools, setting up places for students to stay near distant schools, and offering special help for children with additional needs. Adults also benefit from education programs, particularly practical job training and basic literacy classes that help them build new skills..
- **Livestock support** is crucial for rebuilding community wealth and agricultural capacity. People need help getting animals like oxen for farming, cattle for building wealth, and smaller animals like goats and sheep for breeding and income. This includes comprehensive support like veterinary care, training in animal husbandry, and help with animal feed. Some animals are also needed for traditional ceremonies, making this support culturally significant as well as economically important.
- **Agricultural assistance** focuses on getting people back to farming effectively. This means providing essential tools and equipment, especially ox-ploughs, along with quality seeds and farming supplies. People need training in modern farming methods and help with irrigation to improve their yields. Support also includes practical needs like places to store harvests, expert farming advice, and help connecting with markets to sell their produce.
- **Housing needs** center on providing safe and durable places for families to live. This includes building proper houses, supplying construction materials, and upgrading from grass roofs to iron sheets. Communities need help with the actual construction work, basic furniture, and household items. The focus is on creating homes that can protect families from weather and provide long-term stability, including support for home improvements and renovations as needed.
- **Healthcare support** addresses both war-related injuries and ongoing medical needs. People need treatment for war wounds, including removal of bullet fragments, and access to regular medical care. Support includes help with chronic conditions, disabilities, maternal care, and regular check-ups. A crucial aspect is making sure people can actually get to medical facilities and receive the ongoing care they need.
- **Land issues** require support for both reclaiming lost property and acquiring new land. People need help resolving land disputes, securing their property rights, and getting proper documentation. The land is needed for both farming and living, with some requiring access to shared land or grazing areas for livestock. This includes support for making land productive and ensuring fair access to communal resources.
- **Business support** aims to help people establish sustainable livelihoods. This includes providing startup money for small businesses, teaching essential business skills, and helping people understand financial management. People need support accessing markets, building networks, getting supplies, and developing solid business plans. The focus is on creating sustainable income sources through trading and other business activities.
- **Mental health support** addresses the deep psychological impacts of war. Communities need trauma counseling, both individual and family therapy, and ongoing psychological support. This includes help with war-related stress, depression, and anxiety, as well as support groups for community healing. The support extends to helping people fit back into community life and addressing substance use issues that may have emerged as coping mechanisms.
- **Basic infrastructure needs** focus on improving community facilities and services. This includes ensuring access to clean water, better roads, and electricity. Communities need places to gather, markets to trade in, and proper sanitation facilities. These improvements help make daily life more manageable and support the success of other recovery efforts by providing essential services and facilities.

Effects of attacks on community

(including the next generation victims within the 4 locations)

What effects have the Ongwen’s attacks had on your community?

Based on the stories of the victims from the 4 locations, we can distil the following main effects of Ongwen's attacks on the communities.

Community Effect Category	Abok	Lukodi	Odek	Pajule
Poverty & Economic Collapse	35%	40%	48%	22%
Widespread Trauma & Mental Health Crisis	26%	45%	35%	23%
Health Crisis	35%	19%	44%	26%
Education Disruption	27%	34%	20%	24%
Loss of Lives & Family Breakdown	20%	22%	26%	22%
Land Conflicts & Displacement	7%	18%	26%	23%
Cultural & Social Breakdown	1%	7%	27%	14%
Destroyed Infrastructure & Isolation	7%	8%	18%	1%
Gender-Based Violence & Exploitation	4%	12%	11%	5%
Youth Unemployment & Crime	4%	10%	7%	11%

% of stories that mention specific effect

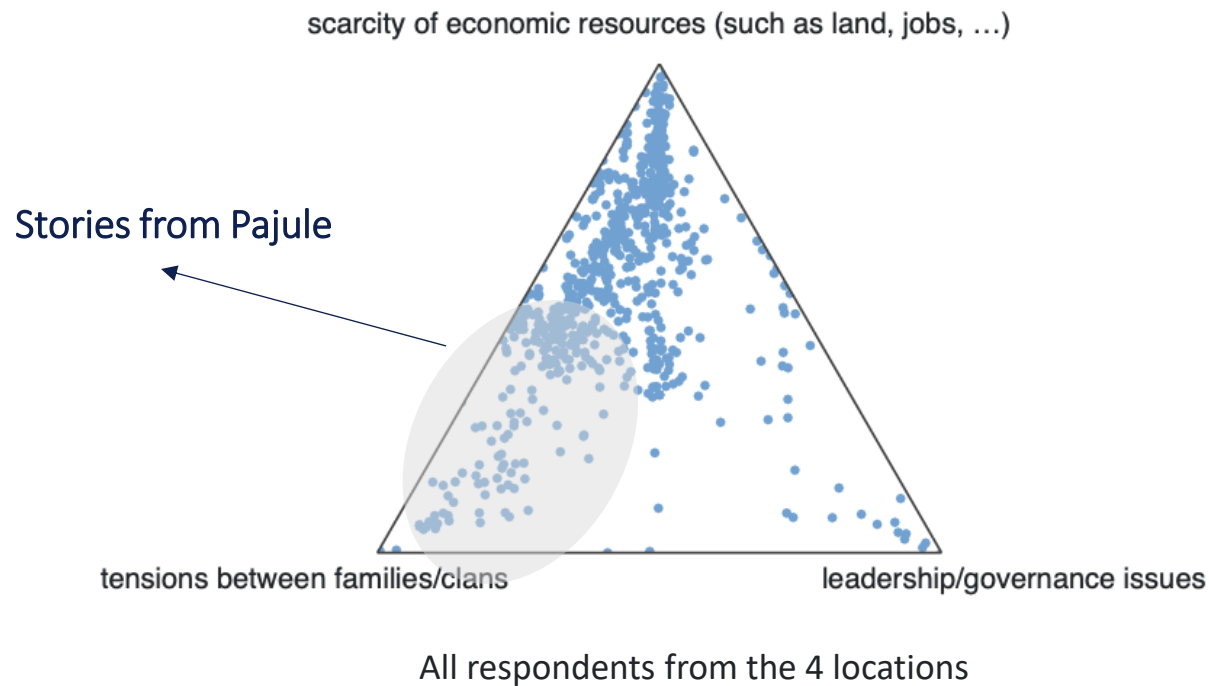
Ongwen's attacks continue to cause severe socioeconomic damage across all communities. **Poverty and economic collapse** are the most common high-ranking effects, followed by **trauma, mental health issues, and health system breakdowns**. **Educational disruption and family breakdown** also significantly affect all locations, with varying degrees of displacement and cultural impacts.

Overview of the main effects:

- Poverty & Economic Collapse** – Families lost livestock, crops, and businesses. Without income or resources, survival is a daily struggle. Many rely on handouts, and people feel trapped in a cycle of poverty with no way out.
- Widespread Trauma & Mental Health Crisis** – People carry deep psychological scars from witnessing and surviving extreme violence. PTSD, anxiety, and depression are common. Many suffer from flashbacks, nightmares, and persistent fear. Alcoholism and substance abuse have increased as people seek escape.
- Health Crisis** – Many live with untreated war injuries and chronic illnesses. Hospitals were destroyed, leaving communities without access to healthcare. HIV/AIDS and other diseases spread due to sexual violence, poor living conditions, and lack of medical care.
- Education Disruption** – Schools were burned, teachers fled, and learning was abandoned. Many children never returned to school, leaving a generation without literacy or skills. Girls were forced into early marriages, and youth struggle with a sense of lost potential.
- Loss of Lives & Family Breakdown** – Many were killed, abducted, or disappeared, leaving families shattered. Children grew up without parents. Widows and orphans struggle alone. The deep grief and lack of closure haunt those left behind.
- Land Conflicts & Displacement** – Displacement and war left land ownership unclear. Families return to find their land occupied or disputed. Elders who knew land boundaries were killed, leading to ongoing violence and resentment over land claims.
- Cultural & Social Breakdown** – The war tore apart traditional values and community bonds. Elders, who were guardians of cultural knowledge, were killed. Social structures collapsed, leaving communities fragmented and distrustful. Youth raised in camps or in captivity struggle to reintegrate.
- Destroyed Infrastructure & Isolation** – Homes, roads, schools, and clinics were burned or abandoned. Many areas remain cut off, making it difficult to access services, markets, or even reconnect as a community. The physical destruction mirrors the loss of stability and normalcy.
- Gender-Based Violence & Exploitation** – Women and girls suffered extreme sexual violence, resulting in lasting physical and emotional trauma. Some were abandoned by their families, and victims are often blamed or shunned. Many live with HIV or children born from rape.
- Youth Unemployment & Crime** – With no education, jobs, or guidance, many young people have turned to theft, violence, and gang activity. Alcohol and drug abuse are widespread. The war shaped a generation that never had a chance to build stable lives.

Effects of the attacks on the social cohesion in the community

As a result of Ongwen's attacks, social cohesion in my community is suffering from ... [Pajule – tensions between families and clans](#)



Across all the four locations and generations, victims consistently identify **economic scarcity** as the primary factor affecting social cohesion.

Compared to other areas, respondents in **Pajule** mention more tensions between families and clans.

1. Land Disputes Within the Community and Families

By far the biggest tension arises from the land conflicts that have escalated due to prolonged displacement during the war. In the broader community, powerful individuals have taken advantage of the situation, grabbing land from vulnerable groups, including orphans, widows, and former child soldiers. Within families, disputes over inheritance have caused divisions, with some relatives seizing land from widows and orphans, leaving them without a place to live or farm. Traditional leaders have been accused of favouring those with money rather than protecting the vulnerable.

2. Stigmatisation of Former Child Soldiers and their families

Among the returnees, Former Child Soldiers are mentioned as a source of tension: they are often denied their rightful place in their families or clans, are still accused of being rebels, or feared for their past experiences in captivity – which causes resentment and conflict.

3. Enmity Between Families Over War Participation

In cases where certain families were involved in the attacks—whether through forced abduction or active participation—longstanding resentment and blame persists.

4. Killings Caused by Psychological Trauma Causes

Some individuals who experienced extreme violence now suffer from untreated mental illness, which triggers violent behaviour, including killings within the community.

Community healing needs (all generations)

How can your community be healed?

Based on the stories of the victims from the 4 locations, we can distil the following types of community healing that are spelled out by victims

Community Healing Need Category	Abok	Lukodi	Odek	Pajule
Education and Vocational Training	42%	56%	57%	44%
Health and Medical Support	49%	22%	50%	35%
Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Recovery	27%	28%	35%	32%
Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services	19%	39%	37%	26%
Infrastructure and Basic Services	16%	17%	30%	22%
Land Rights and Conflict Resolution	8%	14%	25%	21%
Justice, Reparation, and Memorialization	12%	26%	18%	16%
Social Cohesion, Reconciliation, and Destigmatisation	9%	18%	22%	17%
Child Protection and Welfare	6%	8%	12%	10%
Political Governance and Accountability	2%	4%	9%	6%

% of stories that mention specific community healing category

While poverty and economic collapse rank as the most prevalent effects of Ongwen's attacks (ranging from 22-48% across locations), communities prioritize **education and vocational training** (42-57%) as their primary healing need, followed by **health support** (22-50%) – suggesting a forward-looking approach that values building human capital over immediate economic relief (which ranks third at 27-35%).

Overview of the community healing measures (as mentioned by victims)

- 1. Education and Vocational Training** – Calls for renovating or rebuilding schools with free tuition and necessary materials, and establishing technical centres offering courses in tailoring, carpentry, and other marketable skills.
- 2. Health and Medical Support** – Calls for constructing fully equipped hospitals, drilling additional boreholes for clean water, and stocking local clinics with essential drugs and medical supplies.
- 3. Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Recovery** – Calls for direct cash compensation programs, microfinance loans, and livestock replacement schemes to help families restart agriculture and small businesses.
- 4. Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services** – Calls for setting up dedicated counselling centres and peer-support groups that offer regular therapy sessions to address trauma and mental health needs.
- 5. Infrastructure and Basic Services** – Calls for repairing and constructing reliable roads, renovating public facilities such as schools and health centres, and improving water supply systems to ensure basic services.
- 6. Land Rights and Conflict Resolution** – Calls for government-led free land surveys, legal assistance to settle disputes, and training sessions in nonviolent conflict resolution to restore secure land boundaries.
- 7. Justice, Reparation, and Memorialization** – Calls for transparent reparations through legal processes and the construction of memorial centres to honour victims and publicly acknowledge the losses.
- 8. Social Cohesion, Reconciliation, and Destigmatisation** – Calls for organized community dialogues, reconciliation events, and targeted programs to reduce stigma against former abductees and children born in captivity.
- 9. Child Protection and Welfare** – Calls for establishing child-friendly centres, providing scholarships and free education for orphans, and implementing policies to protect children from early marriage and exploitation.
- 10. Political Governance and Accountability** – Calls for transparent governance with regular audits, community representation in decision-making, and clear communication of recovery initiatives.

Community effects and healing needs

Quotes by direct victims

“During the attacks, many people lost their livestock to rebels and strangers, wiping out a major source of livelihood. The community has long wished for a livestock farming initiative that could generate income and restore economic stability. However, land wrangles remain a major challenge, with the government, under the Ministry of Forestry, claiming ownership of former community farmland. This has prevented people from farming, further deepening poverty. The community requests permission to continue using its land, as restoring access to farmland would support economic recovery and overall healing.”

“Poverty remains one of the lasting effects of the war, exacerbated by the looting and destruction of livestock, which were once a source of wealth. This economic hardship has fuelled moral decay, including increased rape, defilement, and theft—behaviours witnessed and learned by young children during both abduction and life in the camps. The war has also left the community underdeveloped, with limited access to hospitals and schools, making recovery even more difficult. Addressing these issues requires financial support for victims to rebuild their lives, as well as investment in education and healthcare infrastructure.”

“Exposure to extreme violence in the camps and during abduction has left deep psychological scars on many community members. Some individuals returned physically healthy but later developed severe mental illnesses due to flashbacks and nightmares. Many children who were raped during captivity are now living with HIV, facing lifelong challenges. Addressing this crisis requires the establishment of hospitals with adequate medical and mental health support, as well as continuous psychological care to help people cope with trauma and rebuild their lives.”

Quotes by next generation representatives

“The community lost a lot of buildings and houses that were destroyed by the rebels during Ongwen attack as I was told by my mother, studies came to a stand still for a long period of time and this prevented the level of education in the community to go high that could have led to development. The community can be healed by building health centers and supporting the current health centers with drugs and medicine because they don't have drugs and medicine always making people get treatment from private clinics which are very expensive. The community can also be healed by opening up a vocational training school in the community to help the youth study and get skills that will make them independent for their basic needs. The community needs more boreholes that will provide and support the community with clean drinking water that will help increase the standard of living in the community.”

“Discrimination is on the increase, some of us who have never known our father suffer a lot in the hands of those that have their parents. There are many disabled people who lost limbs in the attack, I see people without lips and others without ears. There are many uneducated youths in the community, these have not studied because parents lost their sources of wealth during and after the attack. There should be widespread sensitisation and counselling of people to avoid stigmatising each other, people who lost their limbs should be supported with aids so that they can walk, Free education should be given to children whose parents lost their wealth in the attack so that they are able to study”

Summary - Abok

The attack on Abok IDP camp happened on 8 June 2004.

The attack led to widespread loss of assets (74%) and homes (70%), with nearly half of respondents losing family members and 40% witnessing killings, alongside significant physical assault (41%) and abductions (35%).

While victims from Abok nowadays report a relatively balanced impact across physical, emotional, and economic well-being, the respondents from our study feel the least safe compared to other locations.

There is an equal division between those who fear for the future and those who are hopeful, though men tend to be more fearful while women express more hope. Most residents however do feel recognized for the harm they suffered.

Impact on victims' lives

91% of respondents indicated that their experiences had a severe impact on their lives or turned them completely upside down. A small minority reported that things had improved or that the experience now has little effect on their daily lives.

The main effects at the **community** level are:

- **Poverty and economic collapse**
- **Health crisis**, with HIV/AIDS and disease outbreaks being particularly severe
- **Education disruption** has created long-term disadvantages for younger community members

Individual and family needs

Among the key barriers that prevent people from healing and moving forward, Abok victims mention

- **Sources of Income**
- **Family Situation** and
- **Health** (physical or mental)

In terms of what needs to be fixed or improved to rebuild their lives of themselves and their families, Abok people prioritise economic empowerment and education: more than 50 % of respondents mention

- **Financial Support/Capital** and
- **Education Support**;
- followed by Livestock Support and Agricultural support (above 45%).
- **Housing/Shelter** is also significant.

Community needs

In terms of what is needed to heal the community, Abok victims put

- a balanced emphasis on **health and medical support** and **education and vocational training**, with
- **economic empowerment** as the third key priority.

Abok: proposed measures

Based on the insights gathered from the stories—and taking into account the constraints of the reparation programme (which does not allow funding for infrastructure projects such as building schools or hospitals)—the stakeholder expert group proposed a set of rehabilitation and symbolic measures for Abok. Given the severity of the mental health challenges described, **psychosocial and mental health interventions** are considered the highest priority. These are seen as essential for creating the emotional readiness and psychological capacity needed to benefit from subsequent forms of rehabilitation support. A more long-term aim is to **restore victims' agency** (overcome the widespread dependency syndrome). The stories also highlight a significant need **for community reintegration and reconciliation**, particularly due to the high number of returnees—abducted men and women who were forced to serve in the Sinia Brigade or held as sexual slaves. Recommended measures include family and community counselling, *wang-oo* (truth-telling gatherings), and healing and reconciliation circles. **Mobilising local, cultural and religious leaders and local community-based organisations** is key in fostering community healing.

Priority Measures

Subsequent Measures

Trauma therapy and psychosocial counselling
(individuals, families)

Physical treatment

Income-generating activities (IGA), financial management, and loans ...

Community reconciliation & integration (*wang-oo*, community counselling)

Continuous psychological support

Mobilising community-based resources to support healing
Build capacity and engage CBOs (community-based organisations)
Establish & strengthen victims' associations

Education and vocational training

Memorialisation initiatives

Community conflict-resolution and peace-building

Summary - Lukodi

The attack on the Lukodi IDP camp happened on 19 May 2004. The attack resulted in extensive destruction of homes (81%) and assets (81%), with over half of the victims losing family members (57%) and 42% witnessing killings. Abductions and physical assault rates that study respondents reported in their stories were lower compared to other locations. The economic struggles among victims nowadays are reportedly the highest among all locations. Lukodi victims are divided between those who feel safe and those who feel afraid. Like Abok and Odek, there is a balance between those who fear the future and those who are hopeful. The majority feel accepted, but divisions persist, particularly among those who lost land or assets. The majority of victims feel they have been recognised for their suffering, with many viewing justice as having been done.

Impact on victims' lives

93% of respondents indicated that their experiences had a severe impact on their lives or turned their lives upside down. A small minority reported that things had improved or that the experience now has little effect on their daily lives.

The main effects at the **community** level are:

- **Psychological trauma** and mental health issues are prominent
- **Economic well-being** has been more severely impacted
- **Education** disruption
- **Loss of lives and family breakdown**
- **Land conflicts** and **displacement**

Individual and family needs

Among the key barriers that prevent people from healing and moving forward, Lukodi victims mention

- **Sources of Income**
- **Family Situation** and
- **Education.**

In terms of what needs to be fixed or improved to rebuild the lives of themselves and their families, more than 50% of people mention

- **Financial Support/capital,**
- **Education Support** and
- **Livestock Support** is a key need to rebuild personal and family lives, followed by **Agricultural Support** (46%)
- More than a third of people need the **Housing/Shelter** situation to be improved.

Community needs

In terms of what is needed to heal the community, Lukodi prioritises

- **Education and Vocational Training**, followed by
- **Psychosocial Support,**
- **Economic Empowerment** and
- **Justice and Memorialisation.**

Lukodi: proposed measures

Due to its proximity to Gulu town, Lukodi has, so far, received the most support among the four former IDP camp locations. When proposing recovery measures, the stakeholder expert group—alongside medical and socio-economic interventions—highlighted the importance of cultural shifts, which require the active engagement of local cultural leaders across different ranks within the traditional authority structure. These shifts are especially relevant to land access, which remains a primary source of livelihood in the area. One key focus should be on restoring women's rights to own customary land—a practice that existed in the past. This would particularly support returned survivors of sexual slavery. Additionally, efforts are needed to ensure that boys born in captivity, who often do not know their fathers, can be accepted into clans. Clan membership is essential for accessing land.

Priority Measures

Subsequent Measures

Trauma therapy and psychosocial counselling
(individuals, families)

Physical treatment
(grants for immediate needs)

Financial support
(including family counselling to agree on managing finances)

Support for collective farming

Cultural shift – clan membership
(work with cultural leaders and other stakeholders to allow the children (boys) born in captivity to belong to a clan and gain access to land)

Psychological support

Sensitisation of community, government and service providers on inclusivity
(land rights for both genders, human rights, destigmatisation, acceptance of returned abductees in community)

Access to education
(grants for children to attend schools, school materials)

Capacity-building for sustainable provision of services
(schools, hospitals ...)

Trainings for teachers on trauma-informed approaches

Cultural shift – land ownership for women
(work with cultural leaders and other stakeholders to allow women to own customary land)

Vocational hubs

Summary - Odek

The attack on Odek IDP camp happened on 29 April 2004.

The majority of study respondents lost their homes (81%) and assets (80%), with over half experiencing family loss (56%) and 55% enduring physical assault, while abductions and sexual violence were also prevalent.

Nowadays in Odek, there is a balance between those who feel secure and those who feel afraid. Like other locations except Pajule, there is also a balance between fear and hope for the future, with male victims being more fearful than females. Most residents feel recognized for their suffering and believe that justice has been done.

Impact on victims' lives

93% of respondents indicated that their experiences had a severe impact on their lives or turned them upside down. A small minority reported that things had improved or that the experience now has little effect on their daily lives.

Of all locations, Odek reported the most intense harm – over 80% of respondents lost their homes; more than 50% lost members of their families or communities due to killings. More than half of the victims interviewed were physically assaulted or tortured. 15% reported sexual assaults (the highest number across locations).

Male victims report some of the worst financial insecurity of all locations.

The main effects at the **community** level are:

- **Poverty/economic collapse**
- **Health crisis**
- **Psychological trauma and rejection** (by returnees)
- **Land conflicts and lack of infrastructure**
- **Loss of lives and family & cultural breakdown**

Individual and family needs

Among the key barriers that prevent people from healing and moving forward, Odek victims mention

- **Sources of Income**
- **Family Situation** and
- **Health** (physical or mental)

In terms of what needs to be fixed or improved to rebuild the lives of themselves and their families, 50% or more of the victims mention

- **Financial Support** (69% - highest of all locations),
- **Education Support** (59% - also more than any other location),
- **Agricultural Support** and
- **Housing/Shelter.**

Community needs

In terms of what is needed to heal the community, Odek puts the most emphasis on

- **Education and Vocational Training** (57%), and on
- **Health and Medical Support** (50%); followed by
- **Psychological Support** and
- **Economic Empowerment.**

Odek: proposed measures

Odek faces unique challenges as Ongwen's birthplace, including community stigma, complex trauma, and internal divisions, making reconciliation and healing efforts especially critical. The stakeholder expert group emphasised the importance of working with cultural and religious leaders and institutions, communities, government bodies (such as the Courts and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development), as well as civil society organisations, to support effective reconciliation, memorialisation, and peacebuilding processes.

Priority Measures

Subsequent Measures

Physical treatment
(surgeries, assistive devices, HIV and other treatments, chronic illnesses..)

Trauma therapy and psychosocial counselling
(individuals, families)

Income-generating activities (IGA), financial management, loans ...

Community reconciliation and peacebuilding
(mediations, alternative dispute resolution, forgiveness, traditional justice practices, truth/telling, apologies...)

Destigmatisation
(from community sensitisation on the challenges faced by returned abductees to establishing bylaws that mandate respectful and inclusive behaviour)

Psycho-social support
(to individuals, families and groups)
Including therapeutic and community engagement tools such as Music, Dance, Drama (MDD) and Sports activities

Community-based economic support
(community-based saving and lending groups (VSLA, ISA); cooperatives ...)

Access to education and vocational training

Memorialisation
(monuments, ritual cleansing, prayers; preservation of restorative cultural practices in general ...)

Summary - Pajule

The attack on Pajule IDP camp happened on 10 October 2003. Pajule has the highest percentage of respondents who witnessed killings, abductions, and extreme violence. While people in Pajule express feeling most safe/secure and accepted in the community (of all locations), they on the other side express the highest fear for the future (both men and women). While in other locations, the majority of the respondents lean toward feeling that justice has been done, in Pajule, the situation is the opposite: the majority feel that justice hasn't been done (longing for financial compensation, land return education for children, access to health care, recognition, and judicial justice).

Impact on victims' lives

87% of respondents indicated that their experiences had a severe impact on their lives or turned them upside down – a comparatively lower percentage than in other locations. A small minority reported that things had improved or that the experience now has little effect on their daily lives.

The main effects at the **community** level are:

- Health crisis
- Education disruption
- Widespread trauma & mental health crisis
- Land conflicts
- Poverty and economic collapse

Individual and family needs

Pajule reports more substantial barriers than other locations:

- **Sources of Income** (95% - the highest among 4 locations),
- **Family Situation** (74% - also the highest among 4 locations), and
- **Education**.

Social status/discrimination (17%) and gender (11%) are also mentioned more often than in other locations.

In terms of what needs to be fixed or improved to rebuild the lives of themselves and their families, the Pajule victims most often mention

- **Financial Support** (61%),
- **Education Support** (48%) and
- **Business Support** (45%),
- **Livestock Support** (42%).

Community needs

In terms of what is needed to heal the community, more than a third of respondents mention

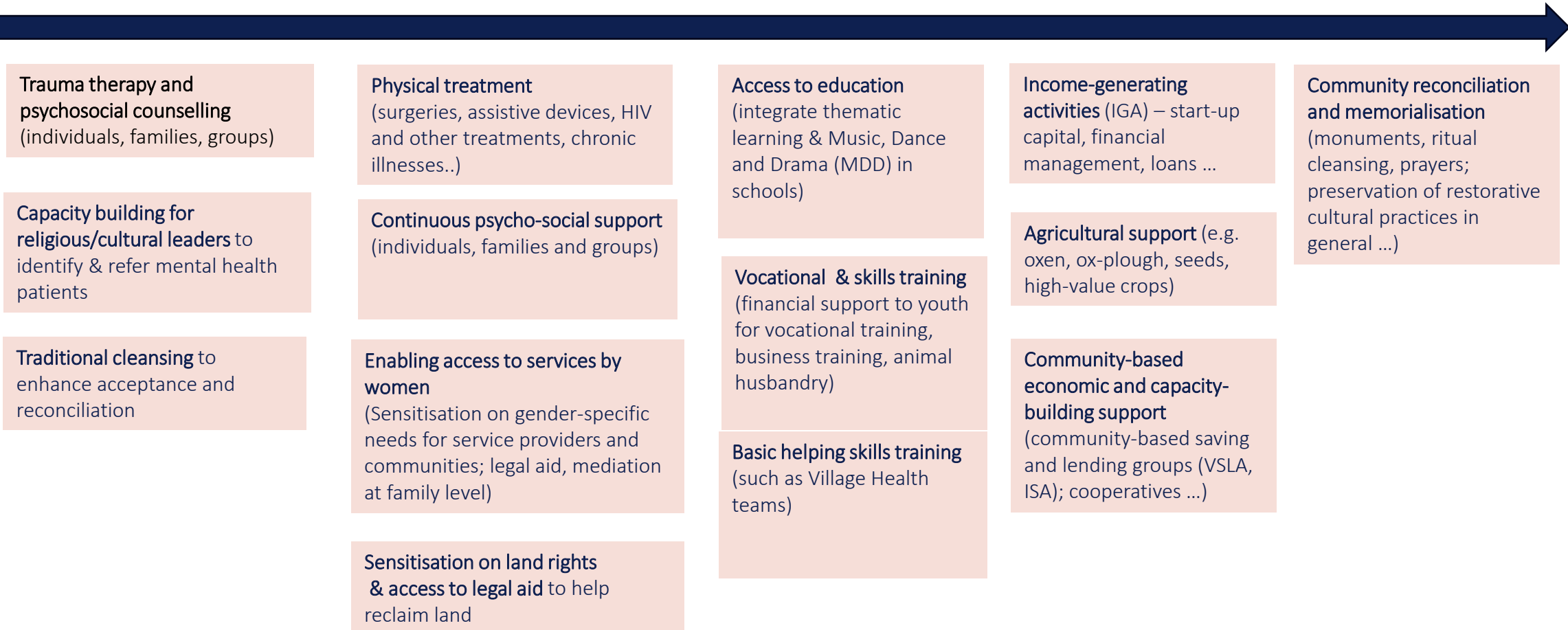
- **Education and Vocational Training**,
- **Health and Medical Support** and
- **Economic Empowerment**.

Pajule: proposed measures

Pajule remains one of the least-supported former IDP camp locations to date. In response, the stakeholder expert group—alongside other proposed measures—recommended a specific focus on engaging religious and cultural leaders to identify individuals with mental health needs, encourage them to seek support, and refer them to appropriate services. Given the high levels of stigmatisation, traditional cleansing rituals for returnees are considered a priority intervention.

Priority Measures

Subsequent Measures





Fonds au Profit des Victimes
The Trust Fund for Victims



**VOICES
THAT
COUNT**

3.2 Thematic Victims: Former Child Soldiers and SGBC Victims



Fonds au Profit des Victimes
The Trust Fund for Victims



**VOICES
THAT
COUNT**

3.2.1 Former Child Soldiers

Killing of innocent souls

At the time of the war, I was abducted with 1 other person, youth were many. We were given guns and trained how to kill. Those that resisted killing were shot on spot. That's why I became a soldier at a young age.

I suffer from panic attacks, tension, and fear as a result of killing many people. I feel guilty for killing innocent people.

My emotional state has also been affected because I always lose my temper so fast.

My economic state is also bad because I don't have any source of income. I returned with nothing from the bush.

My hearing system is not good because of the sound from bombs and bullets. As a result of the war, I'm not educated. I was going to school before the war, but after the war, I couldn't go back to school.

As a result of this, I'm a poor man.

Physically, my whole body is damaged, full of scars as a result of the beatings and the bullets.

Trained to kill

An orphan, during the war, I was taken to work as a soldier, while there killing was the order of the day. So I was personally made to shoot my parents. As a result of this, I suffer from trauma. Every time I remember how I was made to kill my parents, I become hostile and confused because I can't believe that I did so. After the act of killing, I feel bitterness and so much anger within me. I'm very depressed and lonely because of the guides I have. I don't like socializing with people, I want to be alone. As a result of this, I have become a drug addict, because I only gain confidence after drinking and taking drugs. Because of my anger issues, I'm always forced to beat my wife and children even when they have committed no big crime

The problems the rebels brought on me

That day that the rebels came and attacked the camp, I almost lost my mind. We were sleeping at around 9 p.m. when the rebels came and started knocking on the door silently. I woke up from my sleep and heard doors being knocked. I couldn't tell who exactly was knocking, so I also monitored silently from inside. So when they realised there was no response, they started shouting arrogantly for people to open their doors... I got afraid and opened the door only to find they were rebels. They beat me up immediately, saying I was fooling them, and most of them had got access to people's houses.

From there, they tied all of us who they chose on the ropes, while others were being beaten and killed. They left with us so fast because somehow they were afraid the army would intercept.

On our way, we were given lots of luggage to carry and we finally reached their destination. On reaching, we got rebels on standby waiting to train us with all the necessary equipment, and they were so tough. At first, it was difficult, but as time went on, I got used—so used to killing and butchering people.

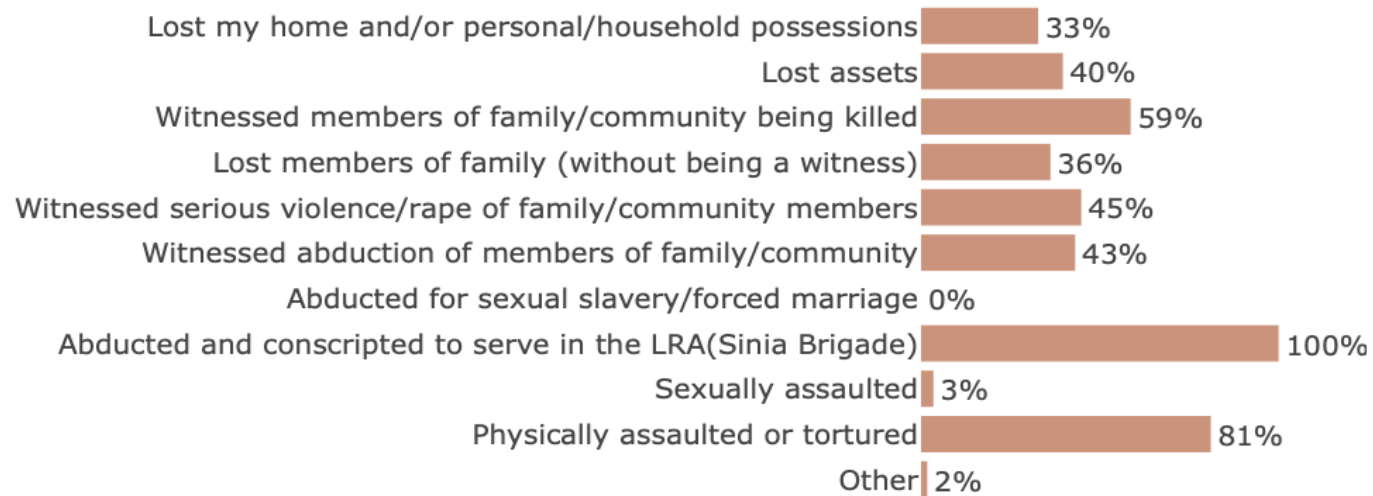
We were made to raid homes and kill owners immediately. I have killed a lot of people and it almost ran me crazy.

The day I escaped was when we were ambushed. That day rebels had spread out for attack, and we ran to take cover with a few of our foodstuff. So we reached some place and they left me to keep the foodstuffs, and that was how I escaped.

I reached home and got my father dead, which hurt me so much. The house my father built is occupied by my uncle who is threatening to take me to court. My mother is HIV positive and so weak. People fear me a lot in the community, and every time I try to befriend them, they disappear. I am just struggling to survive with my wife I later got after I came back. My children are discriminated from the community too, and to make matters worse, I cannot afford their education—and my dreams of education vanished too.

Nature of harm experienced during attacks

What did you experience during the incident(s)?



From the stories:

1. **Abduction and Forced Recruitment:** Almost all victims were abducted as children, average 10-15 years old, sometimes as young as 8 years old. They were abducted during attacks on IDP camps, later subjected to extreme violence to break their spirit and ensure obedience.
2. **Forced to Commit Atrocities:** Once recruited, the abductees became both victims and perpetrators. 75% clearly state committing atrocities, such as killing civilians, including their own parents, siblings, or friends; burning villages, destroying schools; torturing or beating others, rape and sexual slavery, often of abducted girls;
3. **Escape and Return Home:** A majority of the victims (66%) mentions that they escaped during military attacks by government forces (UPDF). Returning home was not a moment of relief—it was often the start of a new struggle: parents dead, homes destroyed, land taken over, discrimination, rejection, loss of possessions, ...

Impact of the attacks on victims' lives today

Summary of the key impacts shared in the stories

1. Trauma and Mental Health Impacts

Victims endure persistent psychological wounds from witnessing and being forced to commit violence. Recurring nightmares, flashbacks, and intrusive memories haunt daily life, with many describing hearing "spirits" of those they killed. The trauma is especially severe for those forced to kill family members as a way to be initiated into the LRA. Despite years passing, these invisible wounds remain largely unhealed, with victims describing overwhelming guilt, anxiety, depression, and sometimes substance abuse as coping mechanisms.

2. Economic Hardship and Poverty

Abduction created persistent economic devastation through interrupted education, destroyed assets, and physical disabilities limiting agricultural work. Many victims returned to find livestock looted and land seized by relatives who presumed them dead. Without qualifications or the physical capacity for stable employment, victims struggle to support their families, provide basic necessities, or educate their children—perpetuating intergenerational impacts. Poverty becomes self-reinforcing, as limited resources prevent investments that could improve their circumstances.

3. Family Disruption and Loss

Victims commonly returned to discover parents murdered, siblings missing, and themselves suddenly responsible for orphaned relatives despite their own trauma and limited resources. The loss of parental guidance, protection, and knowledge, particularly regarding land boundaries, created lasting vulnerabilities. The destruction of family networks eliminated crucial support systems precisely when victims needed them most for recovery and reintegration.

4. Social Stigma and Rejection

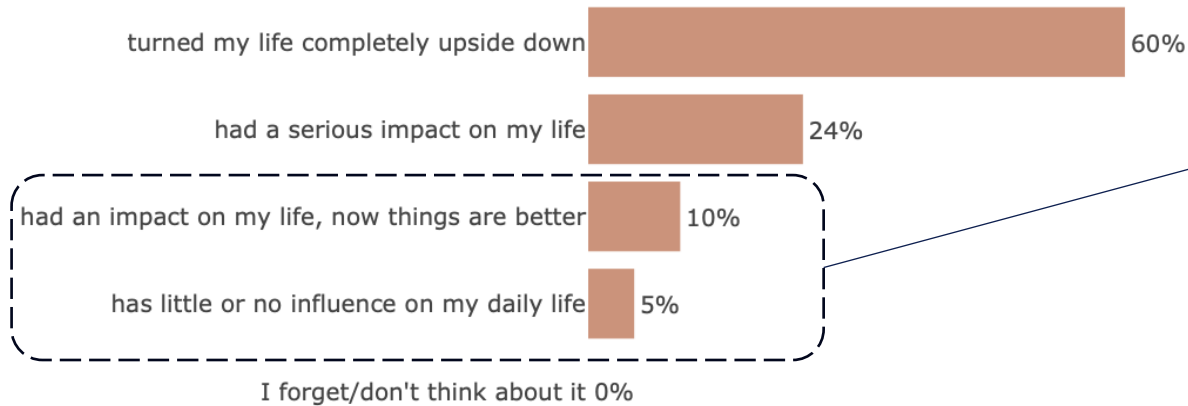
Victims face persistent community ostracism, being openly labelled as "rebels" or "killers" and excluded from gatherings. This stigmatisation extends to their children, creating intergenerational suffering. The social isolation deprives victims of community support networks crucial for recovery while reinforcing their trauma and sense of alienation. Although some stories suggest that stigma decreased over time with local leadership intervention, many describe feeling permanently marked as outsiders in their own communities years after their return.

5. Physical Injuries and Health Problems

Lasting physical ailments from specific injuries (gunshots, beatings, explosions) and cumulative damage from carrying heavy loads create chronic pain and disability. Many report spinal problems, chest pain, sensory impairments, and diminished physical capacity that never received proper medical treatment. These conditions simultaneously limit victims' ability to perform agricultural labour while creating ongoing healthcare expenses. The physical suffering serves as a daily reminder of their captivity, reinforcing psychological trauma through persistent pain.

Impact on the lives of Former Child Soldiers (FCS)

The harm suffered during the attacks ...



For the majority of the Former Child Soldiers, the impact of what happened to them turned their life completely upside down (the highest % of all groups investigated in this study).

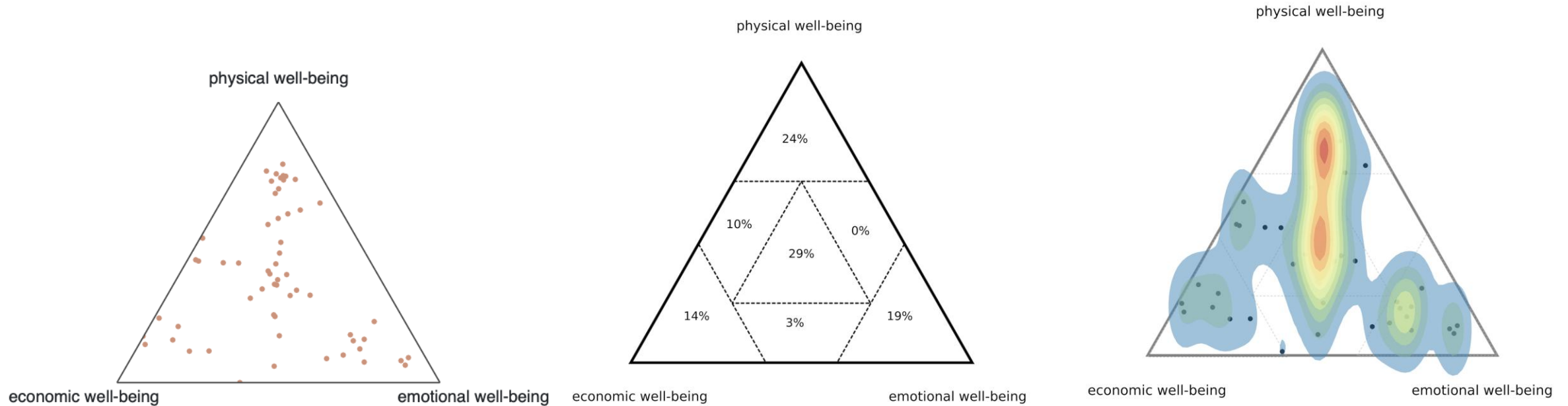
Only 15% indicate that things got better or that the events have little impact anymore in their daily life.

The main reasons mentioned in the stories are:

- 1. Support from organisations:** World Vision provided counseling and food support; NGOs offered educational support; Raising Voices funded nursing education
- 2. Education:** Several returned to school despite challenges and others developed specific trade skills (chapati making, brick laying)
- 3. Economic activities:** Utilising family land for farming, setting up small businesses such as drug shops, chapati stands, cereal trading; Some expanded to bigger businesses (motorcycle business, cross-border trade)
- 4. Family support:** Relatives (uncles, grandmothers) took in returnees, foster families that provided land and care, and some families preserved land for returnees' use.
- 5. Military/government Support:** UPDF (Ugandan army) assisted escapees, helped to reconnect survivors with families and provided medical treatment for injuries

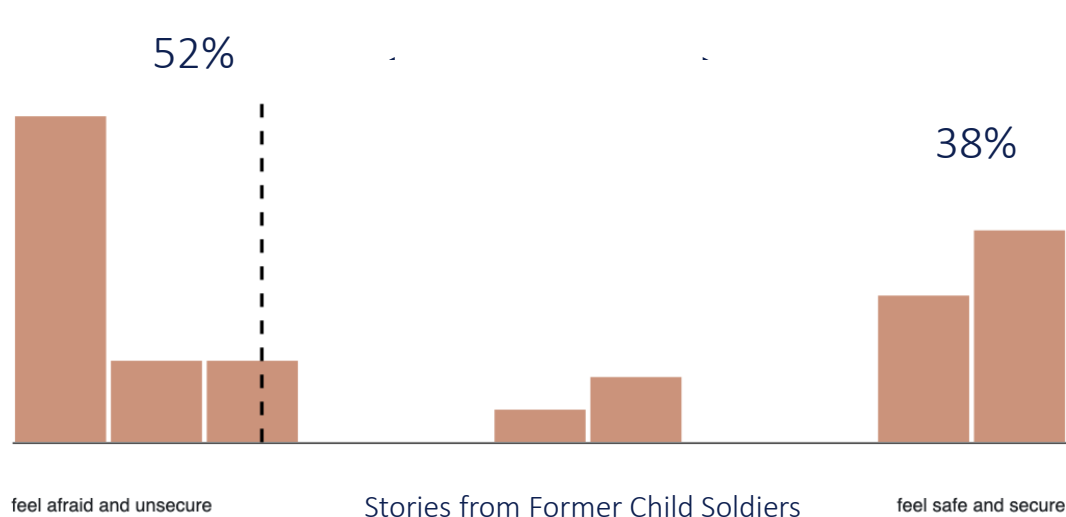
Impact on victims' lives

The changes I've just described in my story mainly affect ...

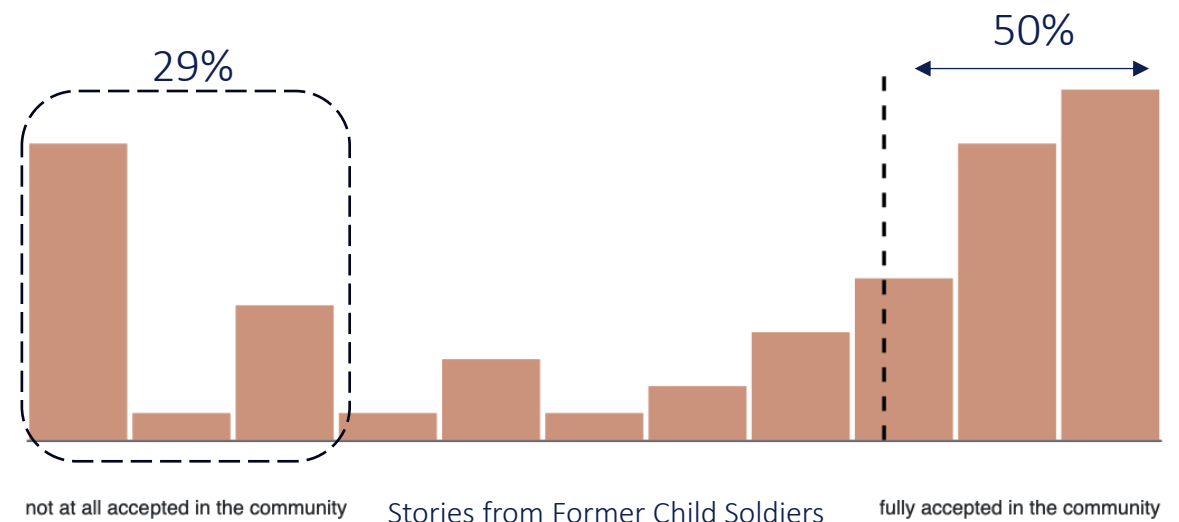


The impact of what happened to Former Child Soldiers is clearly at the physical, emotional and economic well-being with a slightly more impact on the physical and emotional well-being.

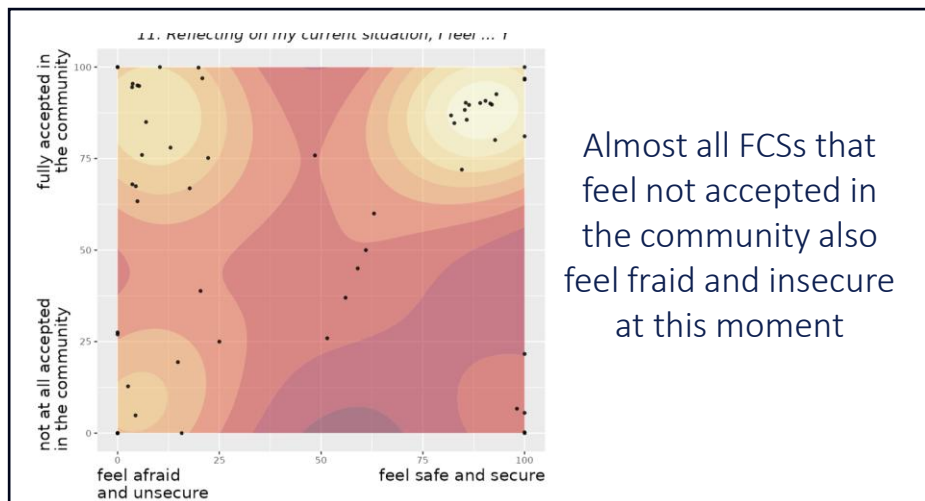
Impact on victims' lives: Feeling of security and acceptance in the community?



More than 50% of the Former Child Soldiers feel afraid and insecure at this moment. 38% express that they feel safe and secure.



Almost 30% of the Former Child Soldiers express that they feel not at all accepted in the community. However, the majority lean more towards feeling accepted in the community.

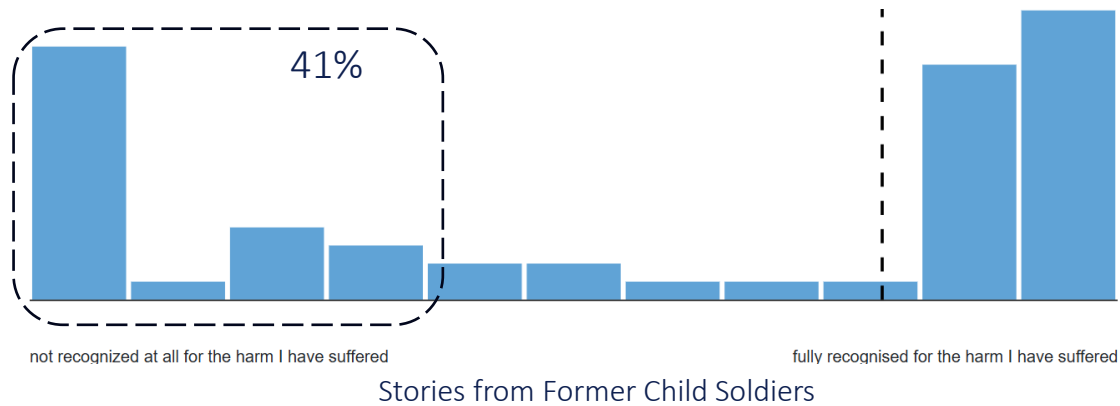


Reasons that FCS feel not fully accepted

- **Stigmatisation Through Labelling:** "rebel" or "killer"
- **Social Isolation:** People avoid associating with FCS, fear, not finding work
- **Family Rejection:** discrimination from their own family member; also, for example, land is taken by relatives

Feeling recognised for the harm suffered?

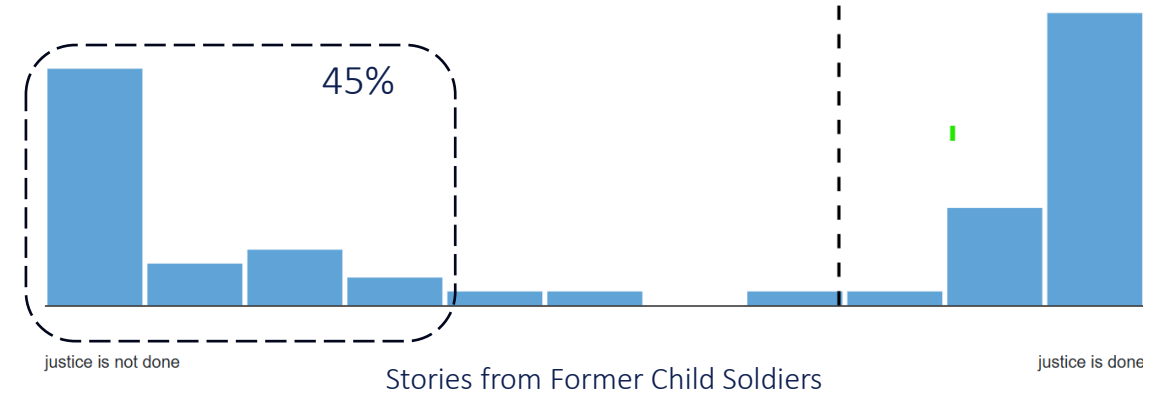
Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...



The majority of FCSs feel recognised for the harm suffered – although there is also a significant number (more than 40%) who don't feel recognised for the harm.

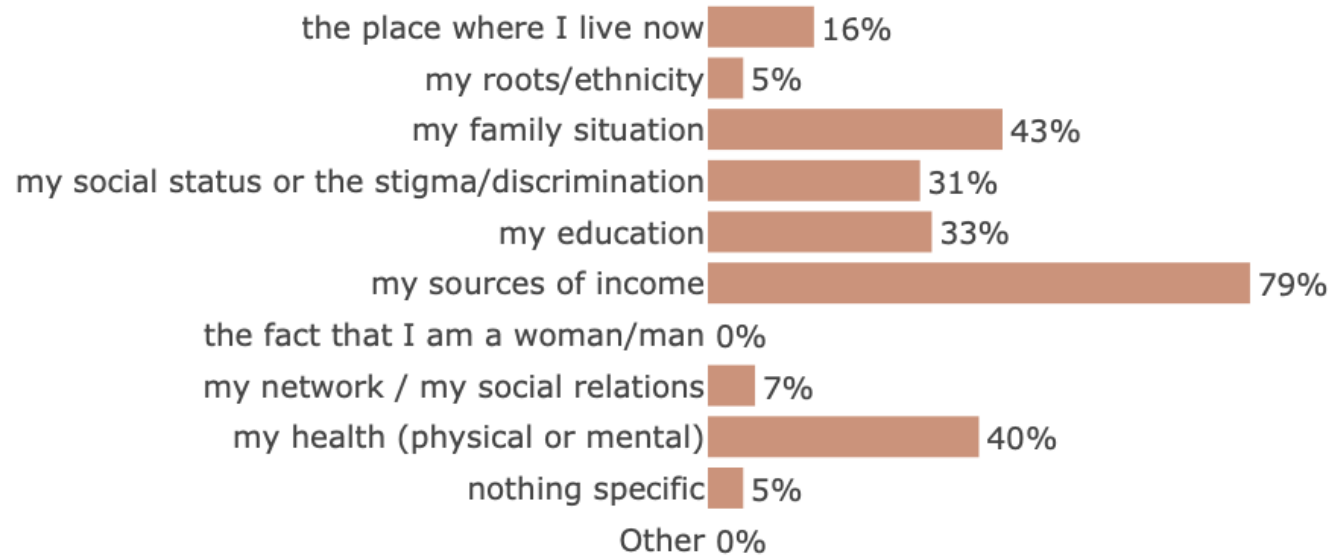
Justice done?

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel that for me...



The majority of FCS feel that justice has been done, although there is also a significant number (about 45%) who don't feel that justice has been done.

What prevents Former Child Soliders from healing and moving forward in life?



Stories from Former Child Soldiers

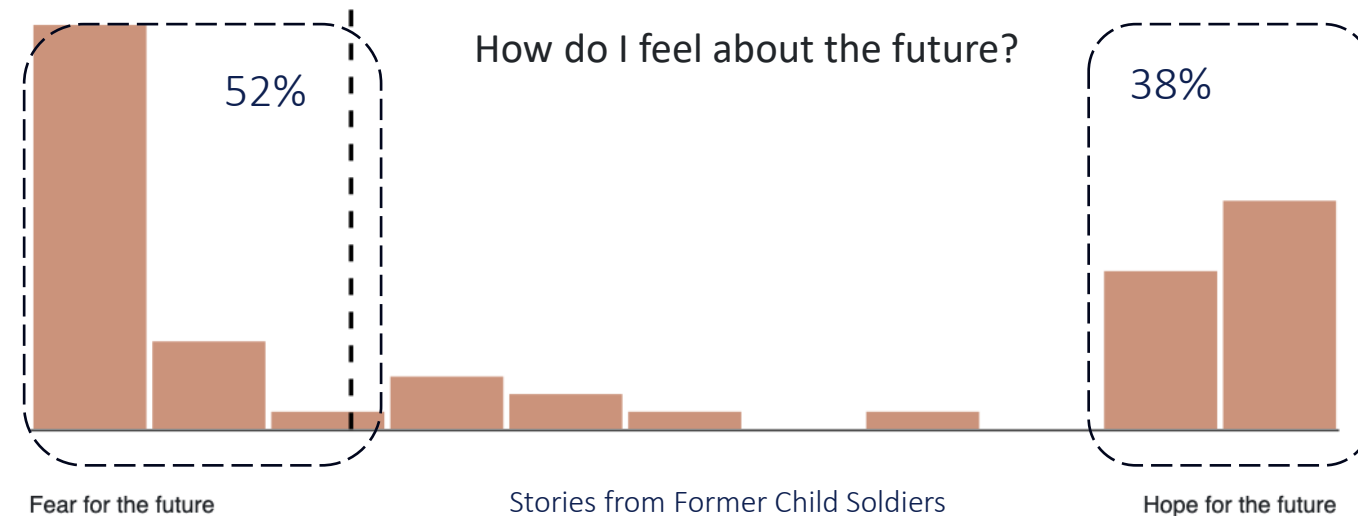
The main aspects that prevent Former Child Soldiers from moving on in life are ...

- **Sources of income**
- **Their family situation**
- **Their health**, both physical and mental

For more than 30% of the Former Child Soldiers , lack of education and stigma/discrimination are also seen as important aspects of not being able to move on.

Perception about the future: fear or hope?

More than 50% of the FCS indicate that they fear for the future. 38% mentions that they look hopeful towards the future.



What might be sources of fear for the future (based on the stories)

- **Worries About Income:** Can't feed children properly, unable to pay school fees, no stable income, limited farmland access, relying on casual labor
- **Continuation of Psychological Effects:** Nightmares of forced killings, recurring flashbacks, guilt over violent actions, memories of killing family, spirits of victims haunting them
- **Health-related issues:** Chronic pain limiting work, untreated injuries (bullets, broken bones), declining mental health, inability to afford treatment, combat-related hearing/vision loss
- **Social Fears:** Community rejection, being labelled as "killers" or "rebels", broken family relationships, children facing discrimination, isolation during community gatherings
- **Fear of violence:** Worry about rebel leaders (specifically Kony) being free, possible conflict returning, fear of retribution, ongoing security concerns
- **Fear of Their Own Behavior:** anger management issues, worry about hurting family, loss of self-control, violent tendencies, turning to substance abuse to cope

What might be sources of hope for the future (based on the stories)

- **Hope for Education:** Returning to school, completing courses, pursuing new learning opportunities despite age, learning practical trades and business management
- **Hopes to Set Up Business:** From small (chapati stands, shops) to more significant business (cross-border trade, drug shops)
- **Work in Agriculture:** Using the farm as a foundation for stability and growth
- **Support Networks:** Family members, NGOs, and community leaders providing crucial assistance
- **Personal Growth:** Finding meaning through faith, traditional practices, and personal determination

Individual/family needs to heal and rebuild lives

What needs to be fixed or improved for you and your family to heal and rebuild your lives after the harm caused by the attacks?

The stories reveal the following top 5 support needs expressed by Former Child Soliders:

1. Financial Support

Many former child soldiers (70%) mainly request direct financial assistance to rebuild their lives. They refer to covering daily living expenses and paying for medical treatment and education, but also to buying livestock, such as cattle and goats, to generate income, or to invest in setting up a small business.

2. Housing

Safe and stable housing is a significant concern. Many live in temporary huts that are unsafe or inadequate. They refer to building new homes or repairing existing structures, receiving construction materials and gaining access to secure and permanent shelters.

3. Land for Agriculture and Settlement

A third paramount need is access to land, which they view as essential for long-term stability: to farm and produce food for their families and engage in commercial agriculture to generate income.

4. Education and School Fees for Children

Many victims prioritise education, particularly for their children, because they cannot afford school fees. They refer to financial aid as a means to pay for school tuition, support for vocational training programs (such as carpentry, tailoring, and mechanics), and job placement services as a pathway to economic stability.

5. Medical Care and Treatment

To deal with long-term health issues caused by the war-related injuries, they express the need for treatment for chronic pain, wounds, and bullet scars, and easy access to hospitals, surgeries, and medication. They also refer to mental health services, such as trauma counseling and therapy, to cope with anxiety and PTSD and rehabilitation programs for drugs and alcohol.

Other support needs that are less frequently mentioned

- Business support (start-up capital & training)
- Provision of agricultural tools
- Peace and family reconciliation (reunion with lost family members, mediation, and assistance to help people feel less isolated)
- Support networks to reduce loneliness and isolation.
- Access to clean drinking water (4 stories)

Summary - Former Child Soldiers

This group of respondents were abducted as children, with an average of 10-15 years old. They were abducted during attacks on IDP camps and later subjected to extreme violence to break their spirit and ensure obedience. Once recruited, the abductees became both victims and perpetrators. 75% state committing severe atrocities, such as killing civilians. A majority of the victims (66%) mention that they escaped during military attacks by government forces (UPDF). Returning home was not a moment of relief and often the start of a new struggle: parents dead, homes destroyed, land taken over, discrimination, rejection, loss of possessions, ...

Impact on victims' lives

The stories of former child soldiers (LRA / Sinia Brigade) reflect impacts at the physical, emotional and economic levels. For the majority of the FCS, this has resulted in lasting physical **injuries** (bullet wounds, lost limbs, damaged eyesight, chronic pain, ...) and **psychological trauma** (flashbacks, hallucinations, nightmares, and panic attacks).

The main lasting impacts are related to:

- **Socioeconomic struggles**, especially caused by land conflicts, joblessness and poverty
- **Ongoing Stigma and Social Rejection**: still feel like outcasts, rejection from their own families, feared by the community and treated as dangerous.
- **Lost Education as a result of the war**. Many want to go back to school but cannot afford it.

84% of the people indicated that what happened to them has had a severe impact on their lives or turned their lives upside down. The majority also suggests that they have fear for the future. A minority indicated that things got better or that the experience has little impact anymore on their daily life. They refer to counseling, food support, and support to return to school or develop specific vocational skills. Relatives took care of FCS and sometimes provided land. UPDF (Ugandan army) and provided medical treatment for injuries.

Acceptance in the community

30% of the FCS feel not accepted by the community. The main reasons are **stigmatisation** through labeling (rebel, killer, ...), **social isolation** (avoidance, community fear, not finding work, ...) and **family rejection**.

What prevents FCS from moving on in life?

The primary reasons that prevent Former Child Soldiers from moving on in life are **lack of adequate income, their family situation and health issues**, both physical and psychological. Also, lack of **education and stigma/discrimination** are seen as essential aspects to not being able to move on.

What are the needs of FCS to heal and rebuild their life?

The support needs that are most need by Former Child Soliders are:

- **Financial Support**: Direct financial assistance to rebuild their lives, such as covering daily living expenses, paying for medical treatment and education
- **Housing: Safe and stable housing is a significant concern; many individuals** live in temporary huts that are unsafe or inadequate.
- **Land for Agriculture and Settlement**: Access to land to farm and produce food for their families
- **Education and School Fees for Children**
- **Medical Care and Treatment** to deal with long-term health issues caused by war-related injuries, including mental health services

FCS: proposed measures

The stakeholder expert group proposed the following measures, tailored to the specific needs of former child soldiers (FCS). Given the severe stigma and isolation reported in the stories, traditional cleansing ceremonies are seen as essential for enabling community acceptance — a foundation for all subsequent forms of support. Cultural leaders from traditional Acholi authority structures are recognised as playing a vital role; therefore, collaboration with them is essential.

Raising awareness and sensitising support providers, local leaders, and communities to the challenges faced by FCS is also critical to preventing further harm. Another key recommendation is that these measures be implemented in a manner that safeguards the privacy of FCS who have not disclosed their experiences within their local communities—whether to avoid stigma or for personal safety. Care must be taken to ensure that such individuals are not inadvertently exposed or re-stigmatised.

Priority Measures

Subsequent Measures

Traditional & spiritual healing rituals
(e.g., cleansing ceremonies)

Trauma therapy and psychosocial counselling
(individuals, families)

Startup capital & income-generating activities (IGA)

Family counselling and mediation

Awareness-raising and sensitisation of support providers, local leaders and communities about FCS challenges

Physical rehabilitation

Vocational training

Community centre activities
(play, sports, rehab, life skills)

Engagement of stakeholders for community acceptance



Fonds au Profit des Victimes
The Trust Fund for Victims



**VOICES
THAT
COUNT**

3.2.2. Victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes (SGBC)

My story is not yet complete

I was abducted at the age of 9 years from Kalongo in Agago district. We walked for a very long distance, and anytime I got tired, the rebel men would carry me. In the bush, I was taken straight for training as a rebel soldier. It was as if they were waiting for me to increase in height, weight and age.

After one year, I was given an old man as my husband. I conceived from him but while giving birth, I narrowly died with the child at birth but God spared my life and the baby boy died. We had a crossfire with the UPDF soldiers, and that husband of mine was killed.

I was handed another man as my husband and I conceived again but had a safe birth to a baby boy. However, again, during a crossfire with the UPDF soldiers, they shot at me because I was also fighting with the child on my back. Bullets caught us, wounding me, but the baby boy of three years was shot dead on the head. I managed to run with bullet wounds, and we crossed to Sudan. As my child was killed, even the father got killed that day.

I was given another man as my husband, with whom I conceived again in the bush. We came back from Sudan to Omoro district to attack the UPDF. Again during the crossfire, it was so tough because soldiers engaged us on ground while a gunship helicopter was up bombing us. We were three mothers fighting together and we all decided to just surrender by running to the UPDF soldiers' detach. The soldiers accepted us and took us for treatment for two weeks because we were wounded by bomb shells a lot. There, we were handed over to World Vision. Within the second week, I gave birth and was under their care for three months with the baby girl.

When I was released from World Vision to join my family, I was first welcomed by my uncles, but when the girl reached school-going age, my family members started gambling, saying that I should look for the father of the child to educate her. However, I heard that the very tough battle where we surrendered is the one he was killed.

Due to many bullets and bombshell injuries in my body, I am always in pain. The scars seem not to be healing inside. I have constant headaches and waist pains. I decided to engage in agriculture, using my hands to grow crops such as soya beans and green gram, which I knew had market demand. This allowed me to earn money to start educating my girl-child. My successful farming caused some of my uncles jealousy, and they decided to deny me land for agriculture. I was frustrated and decided to go into marriage as a second wife. At first, my husband was okay with the child, but later decided to hate her so much. He refused to support her education, but I never gave up on her. I birthed another girl and left that marriage.

I am now a single mother, but I survive through agriculture by hiring gardens to plant crops and sell them. Fortunately, I met one of the ladies who was with me in the bush, and I narrated my story to her about how I had nowhere to stay. She is settled well in marriage to a UPDF soldier who has a lot of land. Together with her husband, they gave us one acre land to settle in but higher gardens outside for farming.

I killed my own sister

Upon being recruited to serve as a soldier, I was together with my sister. We were all trained and tortured together until one day, when the commander learnt that we were sisters, he made me shoot my own sister or we both die.

The death of my sister has left me traumatised, confused, and guilty.

As a female soldier, I was also raped by other male soldiers. I got pregnant, and now I don't know the father of the child. I always get bad dreams and nightmares about my sister, whom I killed. I have suffered from sexually transmitted diseases since the time I returned from the war. I treated them, but they don't cure.

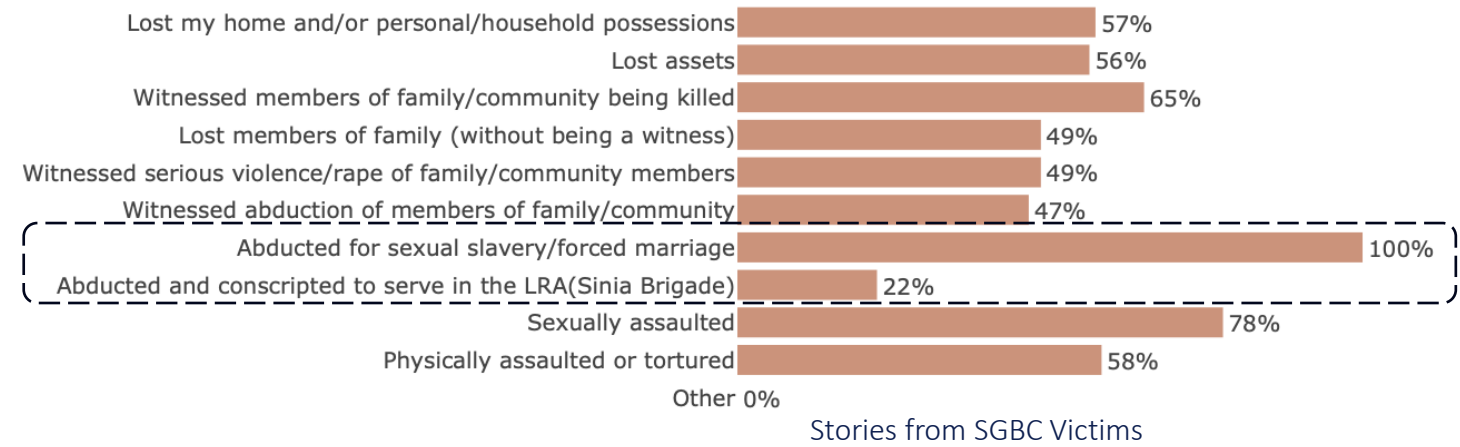
I suffer from poverty, famine, and hunger because of low income, no employment, and no business. I have no garden, and all my properties were taken.

Married at gun point

My story of the Lukodi attack is a very saddening one as I went through what I would call hell on earth. My father and brother were murdered in it, and very many people were killed, abducted, and property was destroyed and or looted. I was abducted too, I was tortured repeatedly on the way to the jungles, raped by over four men, they trained and conscripted to serve in the Sinia brigade, I participated in many other operations within Uganda. I was later given to a man as a wife. He impregnated me, and I gave birth to a baby girl. After six months he was killed in a bomb attack by government soldiers, they pounded our hideout with a helicopter gunship, I was left with no care taker in the jungles, I had to escape with my child and return home, on my way home, government soldiers found me and handed me to a rehabilitation centre. Afterwards, I was reunited with my family with an amnesty card.

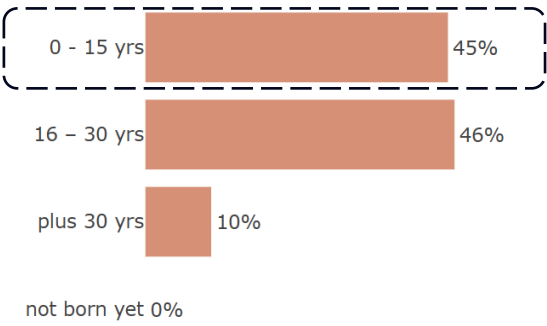
I am living at my uncle's place with my child; he was also once abducted to be a child soldier, so he understands my situation better. He encourages me to work hard and secure a better future for my child. I struggle to pay her school fees. The spirits of the people I killed torment me in my sleep; they appear and strangle me in my dreams. I need divine intervention or some sort of traditional cleansing rituals so that I can live peacefully.

Nature of harm experienced during attacks



This group of respondents was abducted for sexual slavery, experiencing severe trauma and harm. Compared to other groups, they were among the most severely affected. About a fifth (22%) were also forced to participate in killings and other atrocities committed by the Sinia Brigade.

45 % of the SGBC victims were less than 16 years old at the time of the attacks.



Main types of harm by reading the stories:

- 1. Abduction – Initial Capture and Losses:** Women were taken by force during attacks on villages, many of them very young. Deep in the bush, they were distributed among commanders as "wives." Those who resisted were beaten, raped, or killed. Some were forced to carry looted goods, walk long distances without food or water, and endure extreme violence. Many witnessed the killing of relatives or other abductees who failed to obey orders.
- 2. Captivity – Sexual Slavery and Multiple Traumas:** In captivity, women faced systematic sexual slavery, rape, forced pregnancies, and severe physical abuse. Some were forced to cook, clean, and serve the rebels while others were trained to fight. Many had to witness or participate in killings, including those of fellow captives. They lived under strict control, constantly monitored, and threatened with death if they tried to escape. Some gave birth in the bush, raising children in extreme hardship, while others lost their infants due to malnutrition and disease. Psychological and physical torture were constant, leaving lasting trauma.
- 3. Return – Stigma, Poverty, and the Struggle to Rebuild:** Those who managed to escape or were rescued returned to communities that often rejected them. Many struggled with stigma, were labelled as rebels or "wives of killers," and faced hostility from their own families. Women who bore children during captivity were left to fend for themselves, with little support for reintegration. Poverty, lack of education, and ongoing trauma made rebuilding their lives nearly impossible.

Impact of the attacks on SGBC victims' lives today

Summary of the key impacts shared in the stories

1. Sexual Violence, Physical Abuse, and Psychological Trauma

Women abducted by the Sinia Brigade suffered repeated sexual violence, leading to severe physical injuries, permanent health complications, and psychological trauma. Some contracted sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS, while others endured forced abortions or miscarriages due to harsh conditions. Upon return, many faced rejection from their husbands or were unable to marry due to stigma.

2. Loss of Family, Stigma, and Social Exclusion

Women who returned from captivity faced rejection from their families and communities. They were labeled as rebels and treated as outcasts. Women who had children in captivity struggled even more, as their children were also stigmatized. Some were blamed for the deaths of their relatives, while others were denied marriage or support.

3. Economic Hardship and Loss of Livelihoods

After years in captivity, many women returned with no way to support themselves. They lacked education or vocational skills and had children to care for. With no job opportunities, many turned to desperate survival strategies, including transactional sex.

4. Displacement, Land Conflicts, and Community Divisions

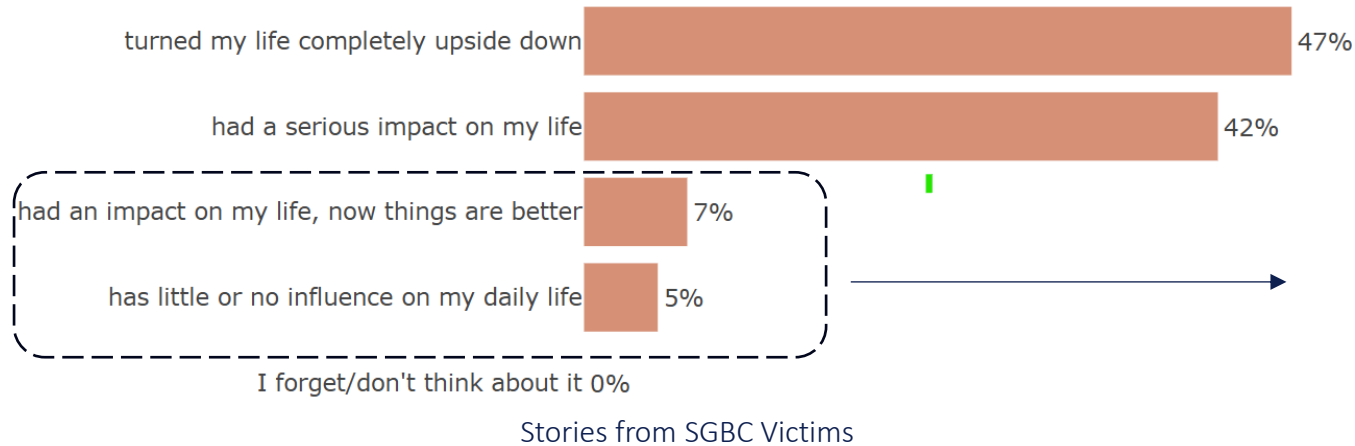
Many women returned to find their land taken and were denied inheritance, leaving them landless and without shelter. Rejected by their families, they struggled to reintegrate or farm for survival.

5. Educational Disruptions and Child Neglect

Many women abducted as children never got an education. Those who gave birth in captivity had no way to send their children to school. The war disrupted entire education systems, leading to high dropout rates and generational illiteracy. Without access to education, many youths engaged in criminal activities, drug abuse, or early marriages.

Impact on the lives of SGBC victims

The harm suffered during the attacks ...



For the majority of the SGBC victim respondents, what happened to them turned their lives completely upside down.

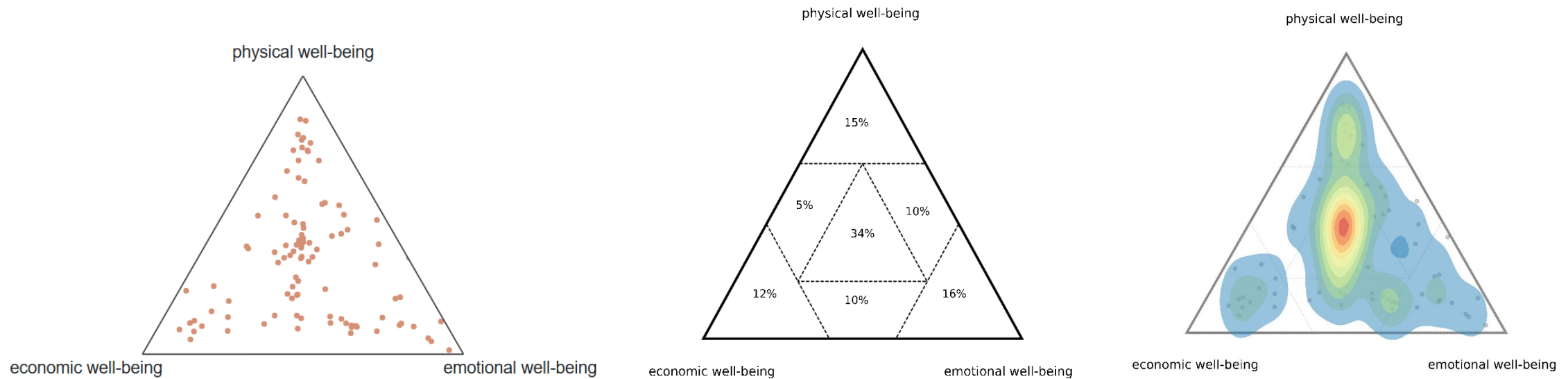
Only 12% indicate that things have improved or that the events have had little impact on their daily life anymore.

The main reasons mentioned in the stories are:

- 1. Economic Empowerment:** Farming, selling crops, brewing alcohol, or running small businesses (trading goods in local markets, baking, tailoring)
- 2. Psychological Support and Healing:** Counselling, traditional cleansing, faith-based support, and rehabilitation programmes.
- 3. Family and Community Support:** Reconnection with relatives, marriage, adoption of children born from captivity, and encouragement from community members.
- 4. Education and Hopes for the Next Generation:** Prioritizing children's education is crucial to breaking the cycle of suffering; some victims have worked tirelessly to fund their children's schooling or seek sponsorship and support.

Impact on victims' lives

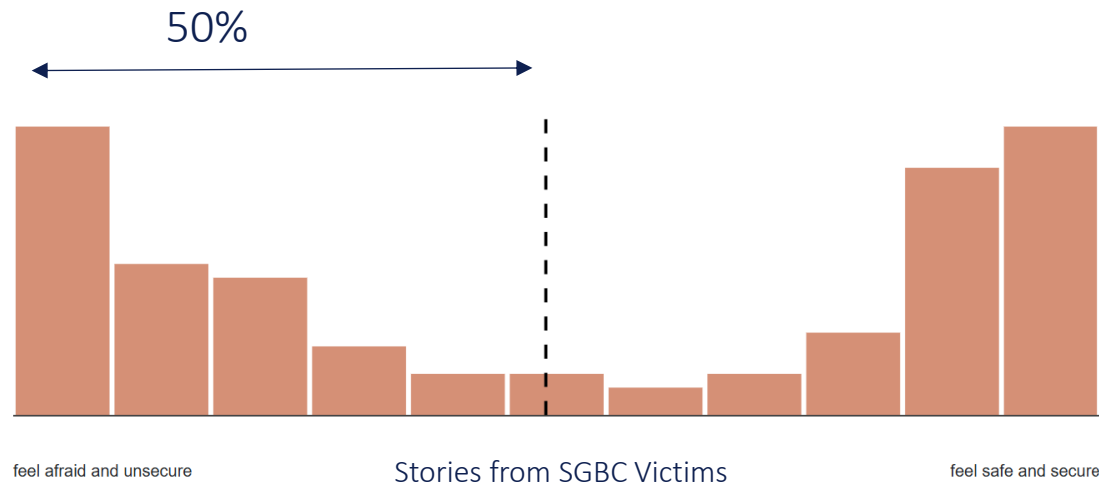
The changes I've just described in my story mainly affect ...



Stories from SGBC Victims

The impact of what happened to SGBC victims is clearly at physical, emotional and economic well-being with a slightly more impact on the emotional and physical well-being.

Impact on victims' lives: Feeling of security and acceptance in the community?



The responses shows a polarized perception of safety/security, with many victims feeling very unsafe and insecure, while another large group feels very safe.



More than 40% of SGBC victims feel not accepted in the community; however, the majority lean towards feeling accepted in the community.

Reasons that SGBC feel not fully accepted

- **Stigma and Discrimination:** "Rebel wives" or "rebels themselves".
- **Psychological Trauma and Social Isolation:** Rejection leaves victims alone, struggling with trauma, anxiety, and depression.
- **Economic Hardship and Exclusion:** No land, jobs, or support to provide for themselves and their children.
- **Rejection of Children Born in Captivity:** They face discrimination and lack access to resources.
- **Loss of Family Support and Inheritance:** Land has been taken by relatives or in-laws, leaving them homeless or without a means to survive.

Feeling recognised for the harm suffered?

Justice done?

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...



The majority of SGBC feel recognised for the harm suffered, although there is also a significant number (more than 40%) who don't feel recognised for the harm.

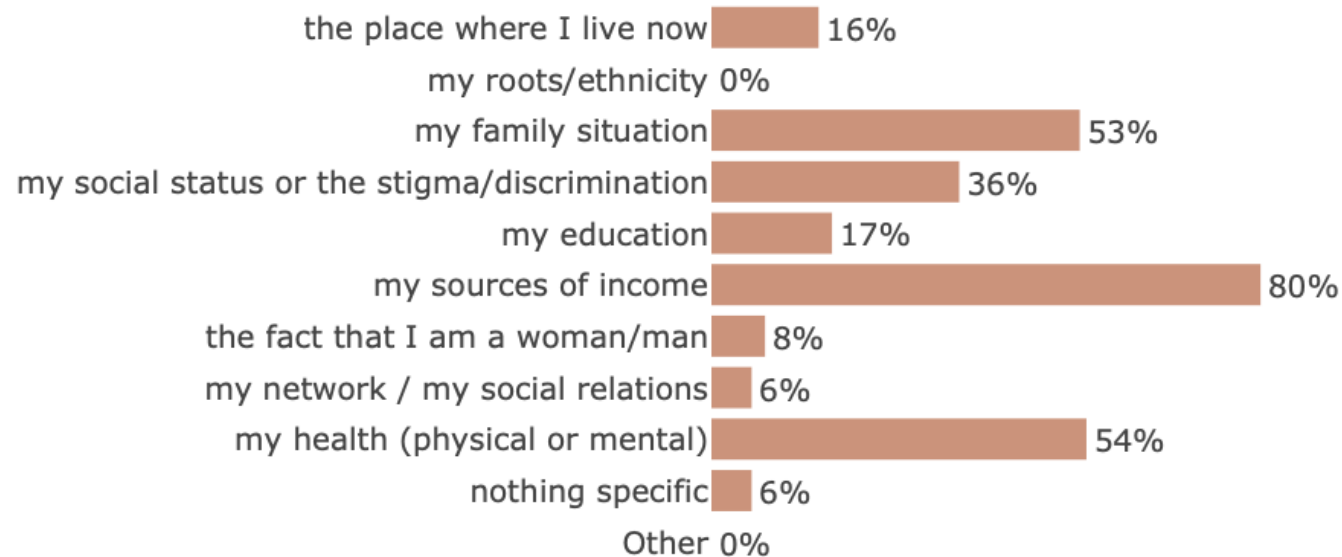
Reflecting on my current situation, I feel that for me...



The majority of SGBC feel that justice has been done, although there is also a significant number (about 40%) who don't feel that justice has been done.

What prevents SGBC from healing and moving forward in life?

What prevents me from healing and moving forward in life?



SGBC Victims

The main aspects that prevent SGBC victims from moving on in life are ...

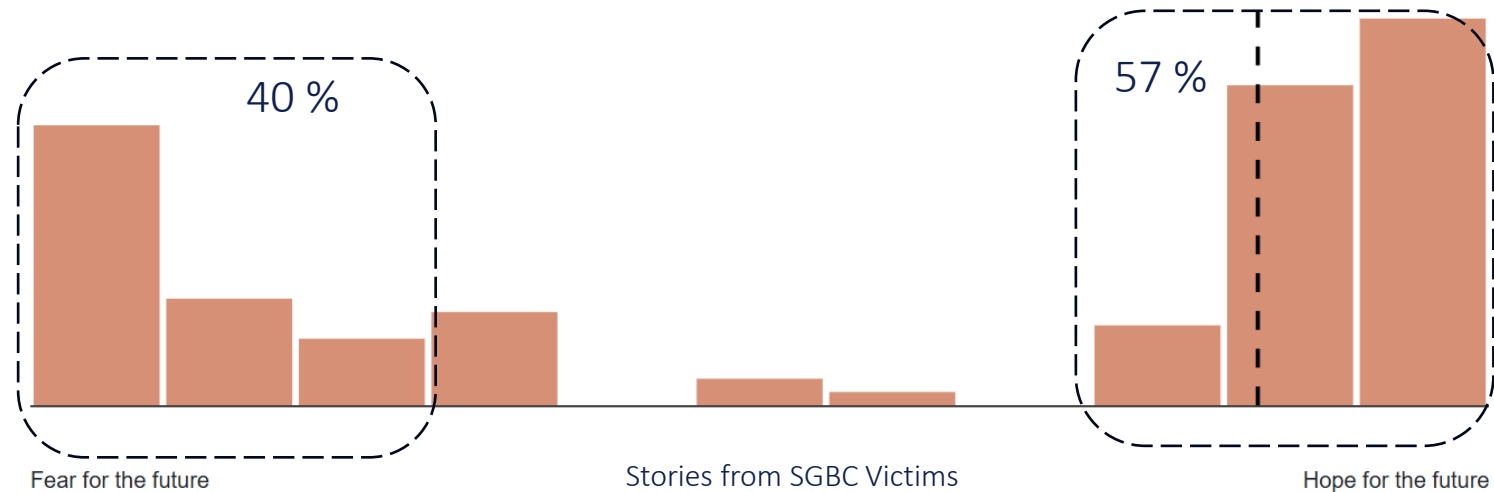
- Sources of Income
- Their Health, both physical and mental
- Their Family Situation

For more than 30% of SGBC victims, **their social status or stigma/discrimination** is also seen as an important aspect of not being able to move on.

Perception about the future: fear or hope?

How do I feel about the future?

The majority of SGBC (57%) are hopeful about the future. 40% mention fear for the future.



What might be sources of fear for the future (based on the stories)

- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Victims are labelled as "rebel wives" or "rebels themselves," facing insults, exclusion, and public humiliation. Many are openly insulted, told to "go back to the bush," and treated as outsiders.
- **Psychological Trauma and Social Isolation:** The memories of war, violence, and rejection leave victims struggling with trauma, anxiety, and depression. Many people feel completely alone, with no one to talk to or offer support.
- **Economic Hardship and Exclusion:** Without land, jobs, or support, victims struggle to provide for themselves and their children. Many rely on casual labour or struggle to meet basic needs.
- **Rejection of Children Born in Captivity:** Children born from sexual slavery are often rejected by families and communities, facing discrimination and lack of access to resources.
- **Loss of Family Support and Inheritance:** Some victims return to find their land taken by relatives or in-laws, leaving them homeless or without a means to survive.

What might be sources of hope for the future (based on the stories)

- **Economic Empowerment:** Many victims engage in farming, small businesses, or vocational training to gain financial independence. These efforts provide stability and a means to support their children.
- **Psychological Support, Healing and Faith:** Victims find strength through counselling, spiritual support, and traditional cleansing rituals. These help them process trauma, reintegrate into the community, and rebuild a sense of self-worth.
- **Family and Community Support:** Despite stigma, some victims find acceptance through family, supportive spouses, or returnee networks. These relationships provide emotional and financial support.
- **Education and Hope for the Next Generation:** Victims prioritise their children's education, believing it will break the cycle of suffering and stigma. Some work tirelessly to pay school fees, while others seek sponsorship for their children.

Individual/family needs to heal and rebuild lives

What needs to be fixed or improved for you and your family to heal and rebuild your lives after the harm caused by the attacks?

The stories reveal the following top 5 support needs expressed by SGBC victims:

1. Financial Support/Access to Stable Income and Livelihood Opportunities

Many people lost their businesses, livestock, and financial resources and would need financial support to restart small businesses, for example, start-up kits for carpentry, tailoring, mechanics, and other trades. Job creation and placement support, as well as access to loans or grants for entrepreneurship and agricultural investment.

2. Education for Children

SGBC victims request the construction and rehabilitation of schools in affected communities, as well as financial assistance for school fees, supplies, and scholarships, particularly for orphans.

Additionally, vocational training centres should be established for individuals who missed out on formal education.

3. Mental Health Support and Trauma Healing Services

Many people suffer from severe trauma, PTSD, and psychological distress due to sexual, sexual violence, forced killing and loss of loved ones. There is a high stigma that prevents people from seeking help. They refer to access to community-based psychosocial support and trauma counseling and the establishment of rehabilitation centers for those struggling with mental illness. They look at traditional and religious reconciliation programs for collective healing and mention sensitisation campaigns to reduce stigma around mental health conditions as well as legal rights/aid.

4. Healthcare Services and Medical Support

SGBC victims express the need for healthcare facilities to deal with injuries, disabilities, and chronic illnesses.

They refer to providing hospitals and clinics with trained medical professionals with rehabilitation programs for individuals with war-related disabilities and free or affordable healthcare services.

They want more availability of essential medicines and emergency services.

5. Resolution of Land Disputes and Protection of Property Rights

Some individuals sold their land out of desperation, while others had it forcibly taken away. SGBC victims express the need for legal mechanisms and government interventions to resolve land disputes and implement land redistribution or compensation programmes for displaced families. Additionally, they emphasise the importance of mediation services to prevent violence associated with land grabbing, as well as community education on land rights and fair ownership processes.

Other support needs that are less frequent mentioned

- **SGBC victims suffer from stigma**, domestic violence, and economic hardship. Need for safe spaces, legal aid, and reintegration support for survivors
- **Stronger law enforcement** against perpetrators of **gender-based violence**.
- **Improved security and protection from violence** due to unresolved conflicts, crime a, and land disputes: Local policing, community-based security initiatives, and reconciliation programmes.
- **Access to food and agricultural support:** malnutrition, loss of livestock, and lack of agricultural inputs.
- **Basic infrastructure for daily survival:** roads, electricity, and clean water.

Summary – victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes (SGBC)

This group of respondents was abducted for sexual slavery, enduring extreme violence, forced pregnancies, and psychological trauma. 45% were under 16 years old at the time of abduction. Many were distributed among commanders as “wives,” subjected to repeated sexual violence, forced labor, and severe abuse. Some were also forced to participate in killings (22%). Many had children born in captivity.

Upon return, they struggled both socially (stigma, isolation) and economically (denied access to land, lack of education, stigma ...), which also impacted their children. The fact that these children returned without a father caused extra stigmatisation.

Impact on victims' lives

The stories of SGBC victims reflect **severe and lasting physical, emotional, and economic harm**, from chronic health conditions (including sexually transmitted infections) and psychological trauma (PTSD, depression, anxiety) to financial instability.

The main lasting impacts are:

- **Stigma & Social Rejection:** Rejection by their families and communities, labeled as “rebel wives” Those who had children during captivity struggle with additional discrimination.
- **Loss of Family, Land, and Livelihoods:** Women return to find their land taken, no source of income, and limited means to rebuild their lives. Providing for their children is a significant struggle.
- **Educational Disruptions:** SGBC victims and their children often missed school, limiting their ability to secure a stable future. Many prioritise their children’s education as a way to break the cycle of suffering

89% of respondents indicated that their experiences had a severe impact on their lives, turning them upside down. A small minority reported that things had improved or that the experience now has little effect on their daily lives. Their stories highlight key factors that contributed to their recovery, including economic support, psychological healing, family and community support, and a strong focus on education and hope for the next generation.

Acceptance in the community

41% of SGBC victims report **feeling unaccepted** in their communities, with stigma being the primary cause. Some have managed to reintegrate through **family support, faith-based healing, or returnee networks**, but many still face rejection.

What prevents SGBC victims from moving on in life?

The primary reasons that prevent SGBC victims from moving on in life are **sources of income, health** (both physical and mental), **their family situation and their social status or stigma/discrimination**.

What are the needs of SGBC victims to heal and rebuild their lives?

The support needs that are most dire for SGBC victims are:

- **Financial Support & Livelihoods** – Direct financial aid, vocational training, and access to jobs to regain stability.
- **Education & Skills Training** – Support for individuals who have lost years of schooling, as well as vocational programs to enhance self-sufficiency.
- **Mental Health & Trauma Healing** – Counselling, community-based support, and traditional cleansing rituals.
- **Healthcare Access** – Treatment for war-related injuries, psychological trauma, and chronic illnesses.
- **Resolution of Land Disputes** – Legal mechanisms to reclaim lost land and secure stable housing.

SGBC: proposed measures

Recognising that SGBC victims are among the most vulnerable, the stakeholder expert group proposed that rehabilitation measures—both mental and physical—should be preceded or accompanied by robust awareness-raising and sensitisation efforts. These should address the specific challenges faced by SGBC victims to prevent further stigmatisation and harm. Such efforts should involve both care providers and communities. Given the severity of mental health challenges, support should include both professional therapy or counselling and traditional spiritual healing approaches.

Another key recommendation is that these measures be implemented in a manner that safeguards the privacy of SGBC victims who have not disclosed their experiences within their local communities—whether to avoid stigma or for personal safety. Care must be taken to ensure that such individuals are not inadvertently exposed or re-stigmatised.

Priority Measures

Subsequent Measures

Mental health interventions

- individual, family, and group therapy
- specialised psychiatric treatment
- traditional and spiritual healing rituals

Awareness-raising about specific challenges of SGBC

- for health (physical, mental) and community care providers
- for cultural, religious, and government leaders
- for help organisations providing support (NGOs)

Physical interventions

- treatment (reproductive health and other issues)
- surgeries
- physiotherapy
- prosthetics
- pharmaceutical supplies

Community counselling

Community sensitisation about specific challenges of SGBC
(land, stigma, mental health challenges, parental roles nad duties...)

Livelihood support

(income-generating activities, financial literacy, credit and loan schemes, startup capital, community-based saving and lending groups VSLA;

Access to education
(for children)

Vocational training
(for SGBC and children)

Restoration of cultural practices
(regular clan meetings – wang-oo, cleansing, prayers...)

Intra-community dialogue forums & creation of community by-laws and ordinances
to enforce respectful behaviour and SGBC victim protection



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3.2.3 Effects of attacks on community & community healing needs

For Former Child Soldiers and SGBC Victims

Effects of attacks on community & community healing needs (For FCS & SGBC)

What effects have the Ongwen attacks had on your community?

Community Effect Category	FCS	SGBC
Poverty & Economic Collapse	36%	54%
Education Disruption	39%	50%
Destroyed Infrastructure & Isolation	35%	44%
Widespread Trauma & Mental Health Crisis	42%	34%
Cultural & Social Breakdown	33%	37%
Land Conflicts & Displacement	26%	36%
Loss of Lives & Family Breakdown	28%	30%
Youth Unemployment & Crime	24%	26%
Health Crisis	24%	23%
Gender-Based Violence & Exploitation	13%	12%

% of stories that mention specific effect

Effects on community

Ongwen's attacks continue to cause severe socioeconomic damage across all communities.

Poverty and economic collapse are the most common high-ranking effects, followed by **educational disruption, destroyed infrastructure and isolation; and widespread trauma/mental health issues** (which is particularly significant for FCS).

SGBC victims report more **land conflicts** than FCS, possibly reflecting gender-based property rights issues following displacement.

When comparing thematic victims (**FCS, SGBC**) to 4 locations, clear patterns emerge. Sexual and Gender-Based Crime victims (**SGBC**) report significantly higher rates of **poverty/economic collapse** than the average across locations.

Former Child Soldiers (**FCS**) experience **trauma/mental health issues** at notably higher rates compared to most geographic locations except Lukodi.

Both thematic victim groups show **higher levels of educational disruption** compared to geographic locations.

How can the community be healed?

Community Healing Need Category	FCS	SGBC
Education and Vocational Training	61%	55%
Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Recovery	43%	50%
Health and Medical Support	48%	41%
Social Cohesion, Reconciliation, and Destigmatisation	48%	38%
Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services	41%	34%
Land Rights and Conflict Resolution	26%	36%
Child Protection and Welfare	36%	23%
Infrastructure and Basic Services	30%	26%
Justice, Reparation, and Memorialization	21%	24%
Political Governance and Accountability	9%	7%

% of stories that mention specific community healing need

Community healing needs

Across both FCS and SGBC groups, **education and vocational training** is the top priority, followed closely by **economic empowerment**. SGBC places more emphasis on **economic recovery and land rights**, while FCS prioritizes **health services and social cohesion**.

Compared to the location-based findings, SGBC respondents highlight **justice and land rights** more, whereas FCS respondents emphasize **social cohesion and health support**.

Community effects & healing needs - Stories from FCS (Former Child Soldiers)

"Ongwen's attack in our communities has made people look at life as though it has no greater meaning. People live because they are alive, no planning for the future anymore. This war, caused the death of many people even children and made many people to suffer very many diseases some which are not cureable. Now people live on drugs every day. Education failed completely because people lived in the camps and schools were the most dangerous places for children's abduction and killing. Most schools got burnt down. Please build hospitals and give appropriate services to save the people of my community. Most people still need counselling services because people's minds are not okay, now many people are becoming mad.

Build schools to revive the education level of the people of this community. The education given by the government is not enough and children only end in primary level. Support communities with money to meet basic needs for each household."

"As many parents were lost during the war it resulted to increased orphans who are unable to cater for their needs. Thus leading to high drop out rate and illiteracy. Moral degeneration has been rampant as a result of the attack. Nowadays fire places which was a gathering for training children are no more. Children today learned from disco hall. Besides traumatic experience has not only affected me but other former child soldiers as well."

"Effects: Rising SGBV/HIV, landlessness among former child soldiers, stigma, disabilities, bullet remnants, cultural erosion, trauma, and malnutrition in child-headed families. Healing needed: Reporting GBV, reconciliation and justice, reparations, rehabilitation, and psychosocial support centers."

"Very many people are not mentally upright, they fight with bad weapons like pandas especially the ones who returned from the bush. Stigmatization and discrimination is still present in the community, people like calling each others rebels. There is generally low levels of education in our community, the existing government schools are very far."

"There is need for sensitization and rehabilitation of people in the community about the dangers of stigmatization and discrimination, this can also help the mentally traumatized people learn to live harmoniously in the society.

There is need for free medical hospitals, vocational and technical schools in the vicinity to allow the youths go and study and community get free medical services."

"Effects: Theft, land conflicts, alcoholism, landlessness for LRA-born children, school dropouts, teenage pregnancies, disabilities, and psychosocial issues.

Healing: Psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and community sensitization on reparation management."

Community healing needs - Stories from SGBC victims

"Because of a lot of bad things that happened to the people in this community, they can't forget the killing of their loved ones, looting of their properties, destruction of community assets like hospitals, schools and churches, deformation of people by cutting their lips, ears, removing eyes, removing teeth, raping and many other things. Our community needs a lot of support for a healing.

Build hospitals and give better services and especially counselling services to help people heal from traumatic memories. Build churches so that people gather for prayers for spiritual healing because now there are no more prayer houses, people mostly sit under the trees.

Build schools for the community children to have better education system. And support communities with revolving group loans for starting businesses. Even restocking of cattle to use for agriculture"

"The former child soldiers and child mothers are suffering from stigmatization, people point fingers at us, they keep reminding us that we are rebels whenever an argument happens, they make us not to forget what we went through during the war. There should be widespread sensitization of the community to avoid stigmatising the returnees and any other people who suffered the effects of the attack."

"There are many fatherless children in the community mainly from mothers who returned from captivity and those whose parents were killed in the attack. Landlessness is also common for the returnees, they have nowhere to settle their families. The fatherless kids should be supported to get lands and settle."

"Most youths are taking weed and sacket spirits due to lack of things to engage them and having no hope in life due to being orphans with no proper guidance. These youths should be empowered with skills like tailoring, carpentry and welding so that they become productive."

"Prostitution: Many young girls sell their bodies in exchange for money so they can afford basic needs. So, education and awareness for the young girls to avoid prostitution. Peer pressure and gambling, because children are idle they have resulted in gambling and they end up stealing and misusing resources. so organizations should be put in place to mentor and monitor the youth. Alcohol abuse. Human rights activities respond and come in to protect human rights, hence creating a safe community and environmentally."

"Just as you see, people's livelihoods were all destroyed now people are living in too much poverty. People are no longer able to do much farming even when God has blessed us with fertile land. People need money to support agriculture so as to produce bigger harvest. We have no bulls and even that still needs money.

Education is no longer a priority for children in families. Children go to this UPE schools just for formality but if you a parent can not support your child to go to a better school then you are at a lose. People are living with very bad memories of the past because some witnessed murders or murdered people, some lost all their relatives and are living lonely lives and many things.

Build good schools with better education and sponsorship for children in this region that suffered war.

We seriously need hospitals to meet a lot of people's health conditions. People are suffering physically, psychologically and mentally. People need counselling a lot so as to come out of the past."



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3.3 Next generation victims

My mother.

My mother told me that it was years back when the rebels attacked the camp, killed a lot of people, and took others. She said I was born on 3rd/6/2006 after the incident. Right now, I stay with mum, with a few challenges here and there, and sometimes I think it is because of what she went through at the camp. Mum is so bitter all the time, and she keeps yelling at me, telling me I should leave her home and get married—yet I feel I am too young for that. This gives me such a hard life, and sometimes I wonder if she is really my own mother. She enrolled me for tailoring a few months ago, and now she is abusing me, saying she regrets taking me for tailoring. Her words are sometimes so bitter, and once in a while, I get annoyed and leave home to find comfort from my tailoring teacher, who keeps bringing me back home. I want to stay home with my mum, but I wonder how my life will continue. I am under so much stress due to lack of parental love.

My father.

My father told me a little bit of what happened when the rebels abducted him some time back, and he didn't tell me everything. He told me the rebels came and attacked the camp, and very many died while others were abducted—he was among those who were taken. He said the rebels made them walk a long distance in the bush before reaching their place, and from there they gave them guns to start killing people, and he became a soldier. He said he later escaped, came back home, and got married to my mother. As I was growing up, there was love in our family. But now, daddy has changed so much. He is very tough and often beats my mother, so she decided to leave and go back to her home. This makes me so heartbroken, seeing my parents in different places. When my mother was going, my father did not allow her to go with us. Now, he keeps beating us so much. Every time he buys something good, he only gives it to my little siblings. I feel hatred has surrounded my family. The other day, he beat me for no reason, and grandmother came and took me away. He got annoyed and said he would not pay for my education. Yet grandmother is too old to take care of me—it's my aunty who is paying for my school. As a girl, I am missing a lot of things like pads. At school, I am bullied that I am a child of a rebel, and a few people fear associating with me. My aunt who pays for my school sometimes invites me to her home and ends up overworking me so much that I don't get time to read my books. I am just suffering.

Twara tuga mama adit (at least at grandmother's place)

I have lived without a father. I just imagine how my father physically looks like. I have been called a bastard by the relatives of my stepfather, and this makes me angry and feel lighter at home. My mother told me that my dad was hit on the head several times with a panga until he died. I didn't see it, but I keep seeing him at night in my dreams. I see my father comforting me, and at times just watching me as I sleep. This has given me strength—I feel like he is protecting me.

I stopped in P4, and my stepfather refused to send me to P5, saying there is no money. I was told to go and look for my clan. My mother decided to bring me back to my grandmother—the one who gave birth to her. I stay with my grandmother, and this makes me a bit better because she is loving and no one tells me bitter words. My mother visits us once in a while. But whenever I see my friends going to school, I feel sad and wish my father was there. I would also go to school. This makes me stay home, because I feel embarrassed when people keep asking why I'm not in school.

My absurd life

My mother told me that she was abducted and she gave birth to me and my brother while she was in the bush. She came back home with the two of us. We were taken to our mother's homeland (grandmother's home) my mother got married to another man and she left us with grandmother. When we were growing up, we faced a lot of discrimination especially my brother who was denied a land. He tried following my mother to where she was married and he was not welcomed. They termed him as a child of a rebel. He didn't have any where to go and as a result of harsh treatment from the community, he committed suicide and I was left alone. Due to hard life at my grandmother's house and no formal education I received, I got a man to marry. I gave birth to a child with the man who married me but later when my husband realised that I was born from the bush as a child of a rebel, he chased me away from his home and I went back to stay with my mother. Currently, my life is very difficult since I am staying with my child and I don't have any source of income to sustain my life now and the future. Every time I think about how my brother committed suicide because of the discrimination we faced and my life is very difficult at the moment, makes feel like killing myself because I am not accepted in the society.

Impact of the attacks on victims' lives today

Summary of the key impacts shared in the stories

Next Generation in 4 locations

- 1. Educational Disruption and Deprivation:** The overwhelming majority of stories mention dropping out of school or the inability to access education due to financial constraints resulting from the loss of family assets during attacks or the death of parents.
- 2. Parental Loss and Family Disruption:** Many children lost one or both parents in the attacks or due to aftermath issues like HIV/AIDS, forcing them to live with relatives who often mistreated them or leaving them without proper care.
- 3. Poverty and Loss of Livelihood:** The attacks led to the destruction or looting of critical assets (especially livestock and land), creating persistent poverty that continues to affect these children's lives.
- 4. Stigmatisation and Discrimination:** Children born of rebel fathers or whose parents were abducted face severe stigma, being labelled "rebel children" or "bush children," leading to social isolation and psychological trauma.
- 5. Identity Crisis and Uncertain Future:** Many children express profound uncertainty about their future, their identity, and their place in society, often combined with feelings of hopelessness and despair.

Next Generation – Children of FCS

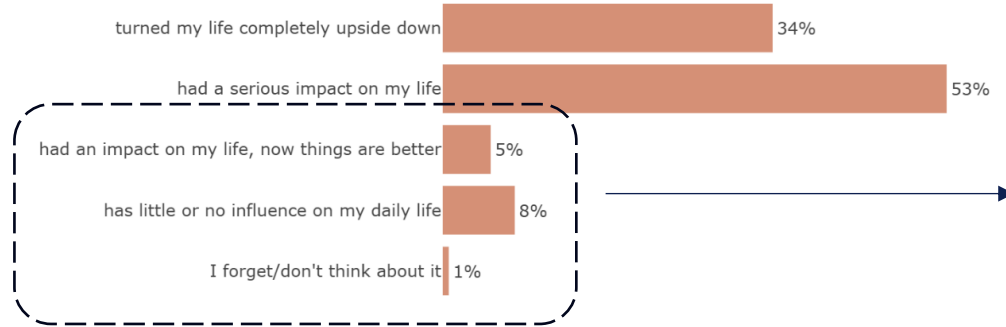
- 1. Educational Disruption and Deprivation:** The inability to attend school or continue education due to financial constraints emerges as the most prevalent impact. Children describe being unable to pay school fees, lacking school supplies, and facing interrupted education, which severely limits their future prospects.
- 2. Stigmatisation and Discrimination:** Many children describe facing severe social stigma for being associated with rebel fighters or being born in captivity. They are ostracised by peers and experience discrimination from community members.
- 3. Poverty and Lack of Basic Needs:** Severe poverty resulting from the destruction of livelihoods, property, and assets during attacks is a recurring theme. Many families struggle to meet basic necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care.
- 4. Physical and Psychological Trauma:** The ongoing health issues and psychological trauma experienced by parents (former abductees) directly affect their children. Parents suffer from physical injuries, mental health issues, and trauma from their experiences during captivity.
- 5. Land Conflicts and Displacement:** Many families face issues related to land ownership, displacement, and housing insecurity as a direct result of the attacks. This includes loss of ancestral land, disputed ownership, and being forced to rent or live on others' land.

Next Generation – Children of SGBC

- 1. Educational Disruption and Deprivation:** Education emerges as the most frequently cited loss. Children born from or affected by captivity face systematic barriers to education due to poverty, discrimination, and family disruption, leading to profound disappointment and limited future prospects.
- 2. Stigmatization and Social Rejection:** Children born to abducted mothers face severe stigma, labelled as "children of rebels" or "children of bad luck." This stigmatisation causes psychological trauma, social isolation, and ongoing identity crises.
- 3. Land Conflicts and Insecure Housing:** Many returnees and their children face significant land disputes upon return, particularly those born in captivity, who are unable to claim ancestral land. This leads to displacement, homelessness, and economic insecurity.
- 4. Broken Family Structures and Identity Crisis:** Children born of war face profound identity crises, not knowing their biological fathers or being rejected by stepfathers. Many struggle with questions of belonging and face rejection from maternal families as well.
- 5. Poverty and Economic Hardship:** Families of returnees face extreme poverty due to loss of assets, inability to farm due to land issues, and health problems resulting from war trauma. Many engage in casual labour with minimal returns.

Impact of the attacks on victims' lives today - Next Generation

The harm suffered during the attacks ...



For the majority of the next generation, the attacks had a profound impact on their lives (highest percentage across all next-generation groups).

For the next generation victims we see a relative equally impact between **male and female victims**, however for female children from SGBC victims we see a much higher percentage of people stating that their life was turned upside down (40%) compared to male children (7%) .

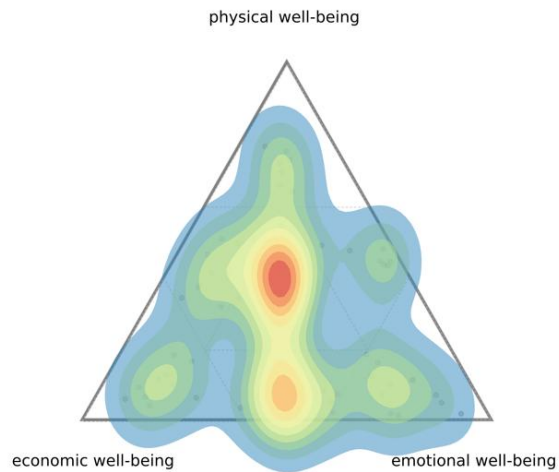
Only 16% indicate that things got better or that the events have little impact on their daily life. The main reasons mentioned in the stories are (ranked in order of frequency from top to bottom):

1. **Entrepreneurship & Self-Reliance:** People found hope by starting small businesses, ranging from shops to welding workshops and food stalls. They discovered that through hard work and initiative, they could create sustainable livelihoods despite losing everything.
2. **Education as a Path Forward:** Many viewed education as their ticket to a better future, with numerous stories highlighting determined efforts to stay in school despite financial hardships. The pursuit of knowledge represented possibility beyond their traumatic past.
3. **Family & Community Support:** Relatives stepping in to help - uncles, aunts, and grandmothers taking in children who lost parents - provided crucial stability. These support networks offered both emotional comfort and practical assistance.
4. **Faith & Spiritual Resilience:** Religious belief provided many survivors with the strength to persevere, with references to God's provision, church support, and prayer appearing throughout their testimonies as sources of comfort and hope.
5. **Vocational Skills Development:** Learning practical trades (welding, tailoring, mechanics, construction) offered concrete paths to financial independence and dignity, especially for those who couldn't continue formal education.

Impact of the attacks on victims' lives today

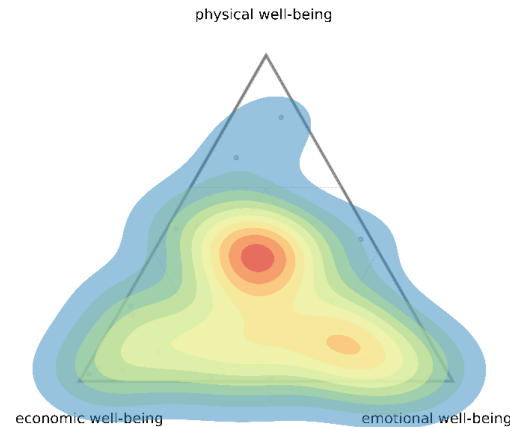
The changes I have just described in my story mainly affect...

Next Generation_4 locations



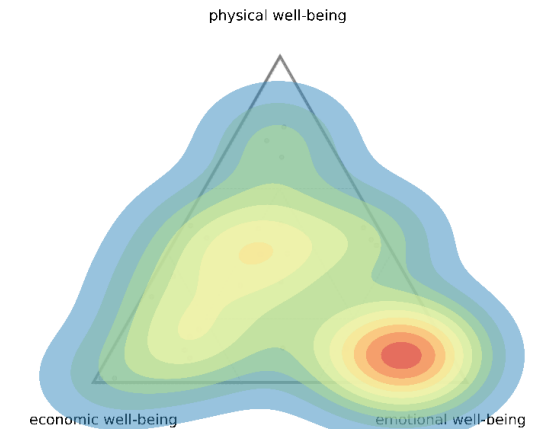
Male respondents report a slightly greater impact on economic well-being than female next-generation victims.

Next Generation_FCS



Male respondents have a greater impact on emotional well-being, while female next-generation victims have a greater impact on economic well-being.

Next Generation_SGBC



Female respondents report a greater impact on both economic and emotional well-being than male respondents, who experience a slightly greater impact on physical well-being.

Across all next-generation groups, the impact of the Ongwen attacks (and other atrocities) on the next-generation victims clearly affects physical, emotional and economic well-being, with a slightly more impact on emotional and economic well-being. **SGBC children** report a particularly strong effect on their emotional well-being.

Impact of the attacks on victims' lives today

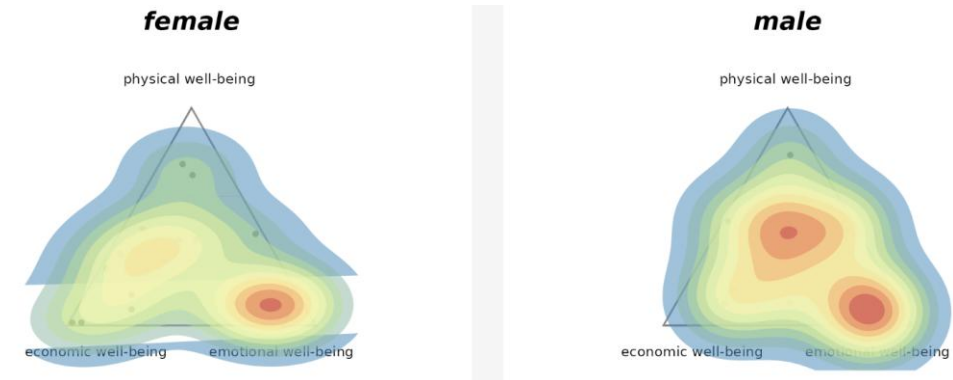
The changes I have just described in my story mainly affect...

Children of Former Child Soldiers



Female next-generation FCS victims lean more towards an impact on economic well-being, while male next-generation FCS victims show a higher impact on the emotional well-being.

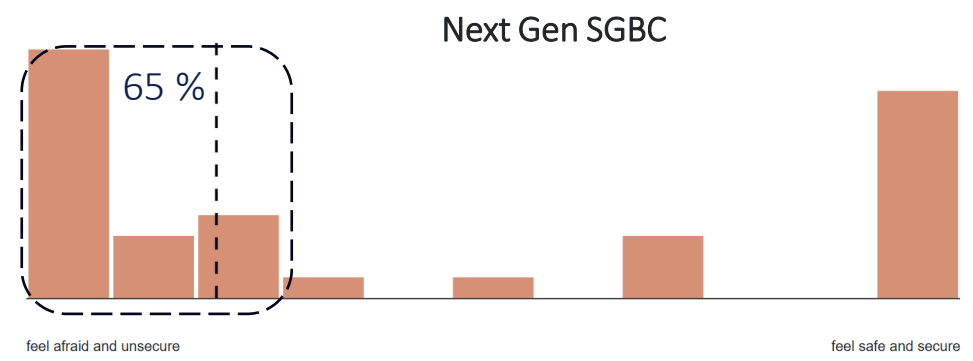
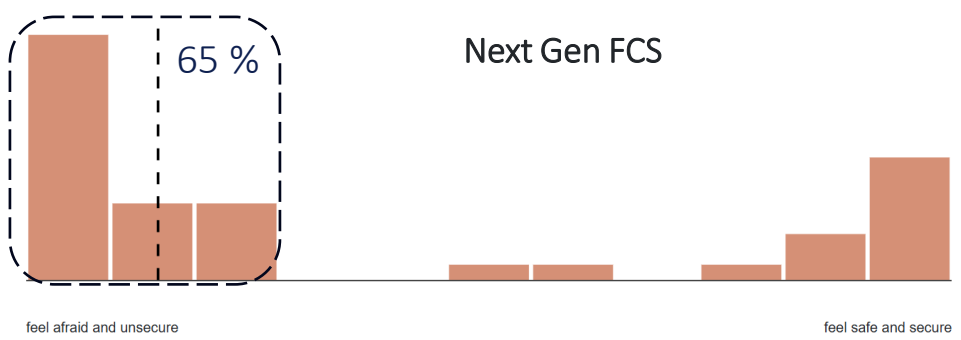
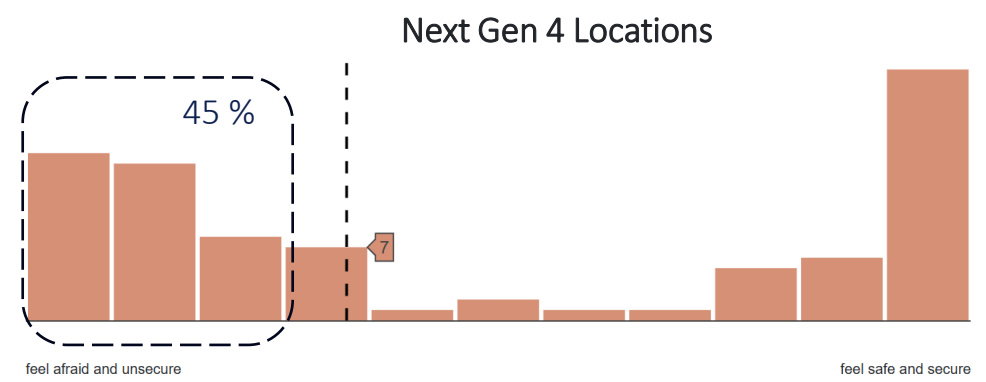
Children of victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes



Female next-generation SGBC victims show lean more towards an impact on economic and emotional well-being, while male next-generation SGBC victims show a higher impact on the emotional well-being.

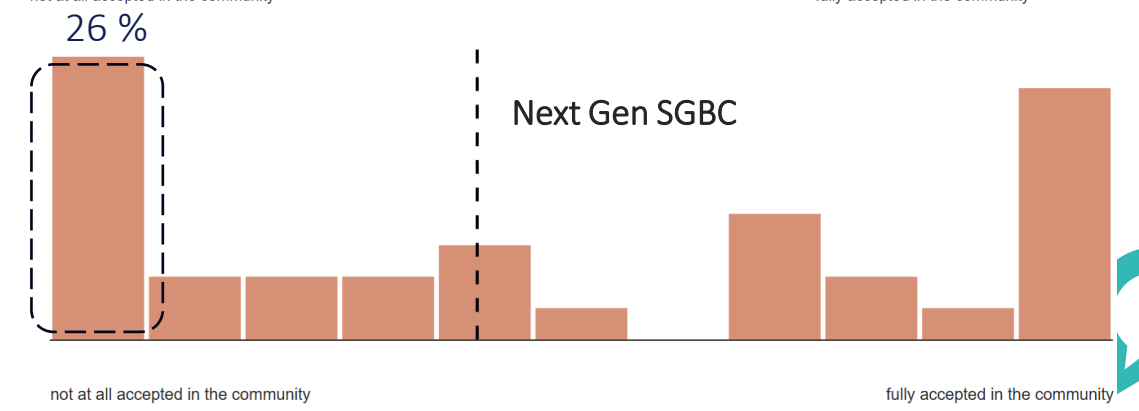
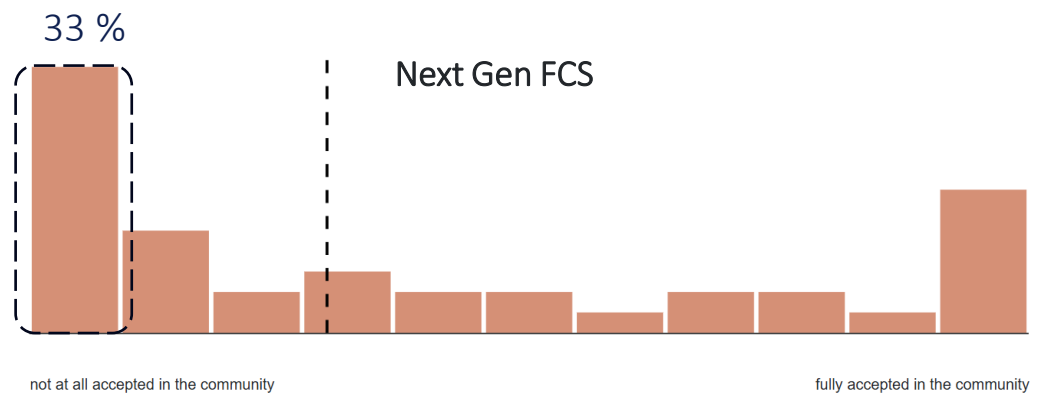
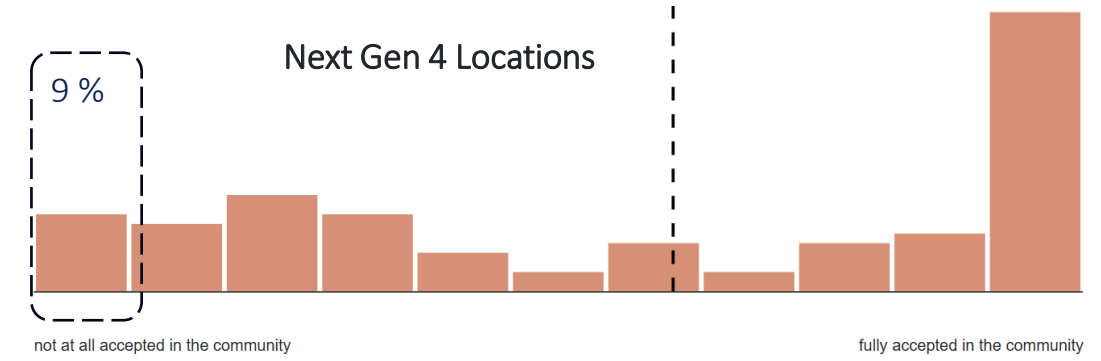
Impact on the life of Next Generation: safety and security?

Based on what I shared in my story, I ...



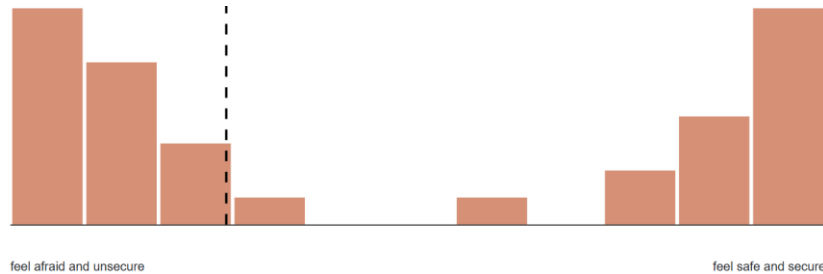
Impact on the life of Next Generation: acceptance in the community?

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...

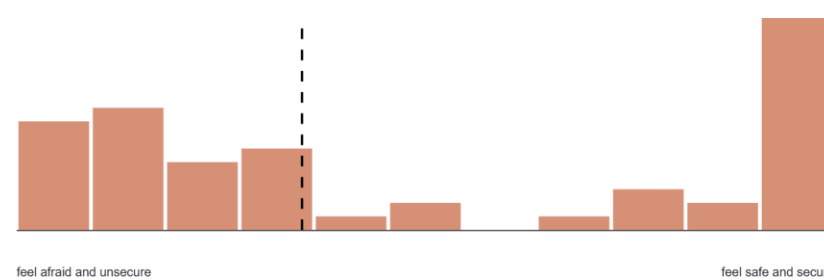


Impact of the attacks on victims' lives today – Per gender

Next Gen 4 locations - female

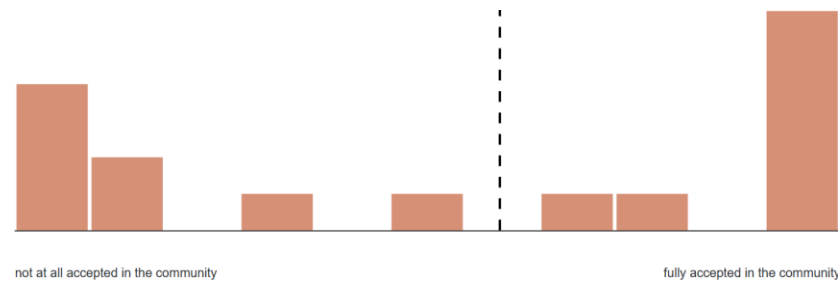


Next Gen 4 locations - male

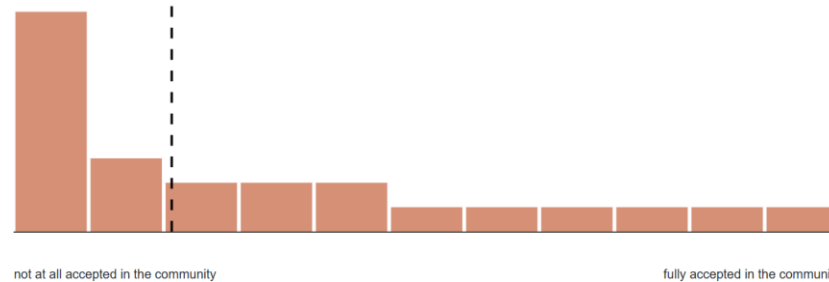


Female next-generation victims feel more afraid and insecure compared to male next-generation victims.

Next Gen FCS - female

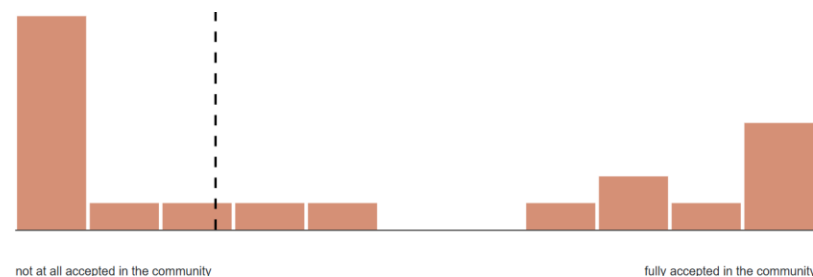


Next Gen FCS - male

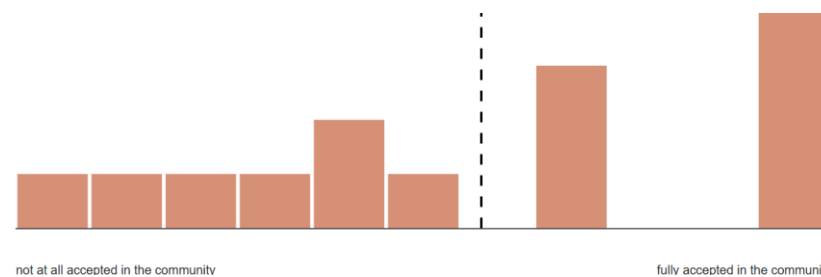


Male next-generation FCS victims feel less accepted in the community compared to female next-generation victims.

Next Gen SGBC - female



Next Gen SGBC - male



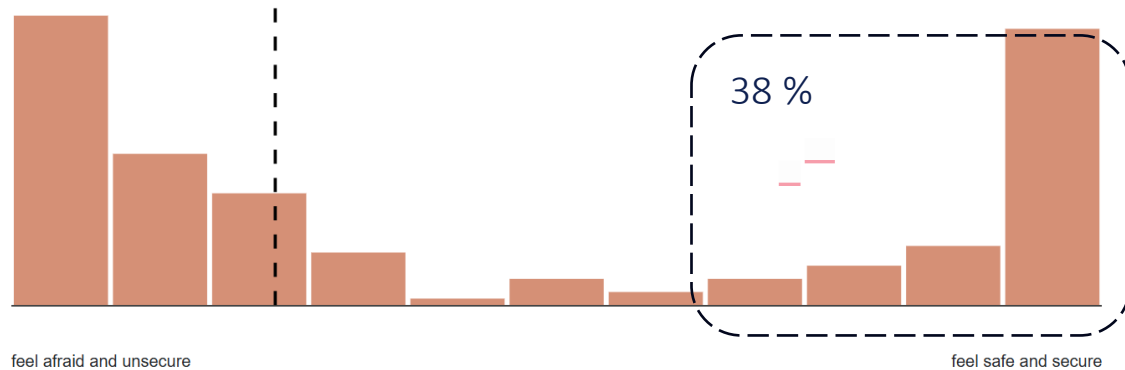
Female next-generation SGBC victims feel less accepted in the community compared to male next-generation victims.

Impact on the life of Next Generation (all subgroups): afraid and insecure or safe and secure?

Given the difficult circumstances many next-generation victims face, it is helpful to examine the sources of hope, safety, and acceptance reflected in their stories. Analysing the stories that appear to the right in the graph reveals three distinct patterns of support and resilience:

- **Family Bonds & Extended Family Support**
- **External Support** – Neighbours, Community, and Institutions
- **Personal Agency** – Taking proactive steps in education and business engagement

Based on what I shared in my story, I



Quotes that illustrate potential sources of safety and security

Family Bonds & Extended Family Support

"Both my uncle and his wife have been so good to me... treated me as their own child"

"My grandmother is loving and no one tells me bitter words... this makes me a bit better"

External Support – Neighbours, Community and Institutions

"I'm grateful about the opportunity that the church has given me to learn how to build... this has brought some hope on our lives"

Personal Agency (Education, Business endeavours)

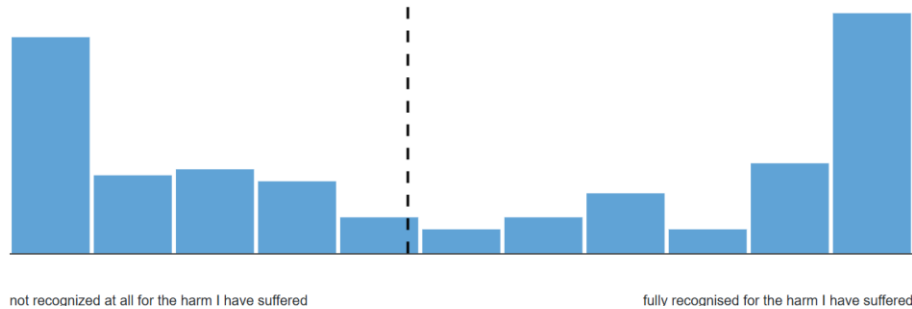
"One person offered me to work in his workshop for welding at the trading center where I have learnt welding"

"I am so determined to read and change the story of my life and that of my family"

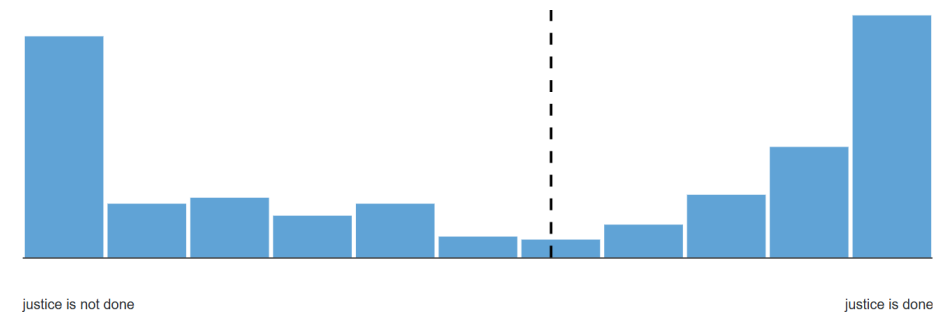
Feeling recognised for the harm suffered?

Justice done?

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...



Reflecting on my current situation, I feel that for me...



The next-generation victims occupy the full spectrum of 'feeling recognised for the harm suffered'. Thematic victims' children (FCS, SGBC) feel somewhat less recognised for the harm they suffered.

There are no significant differences between male and female victims.

The Next Generation victims occupy the full spectrum of 'feeling that justice has been done'. Thematic victims' children (FCS, SGBC) feel somewhat less that justice has been done.

There are no significant differences between male and female victims.

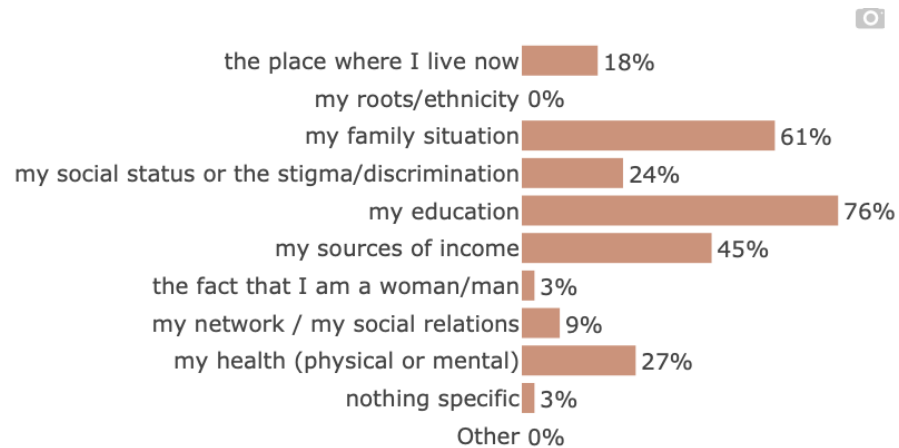
What prevents me from healing and moving forward (per gender)?

Next-generation victims in the 4 locations

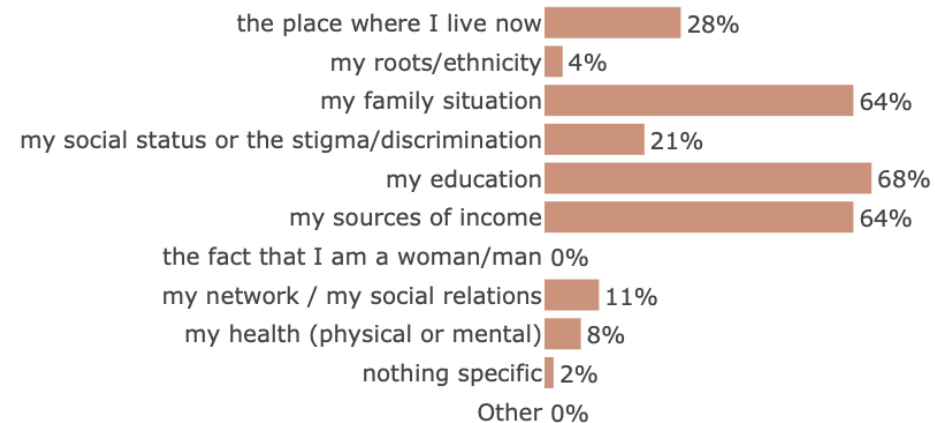
Both male and family next generation victims refer to their **education**, their **family situation** and their **sources of income** as the main reasons for not healing or moving on in life.

More than 25% of the **female next generation victims** also indicate **health (physical or mental)**.

Female victims



Male victims

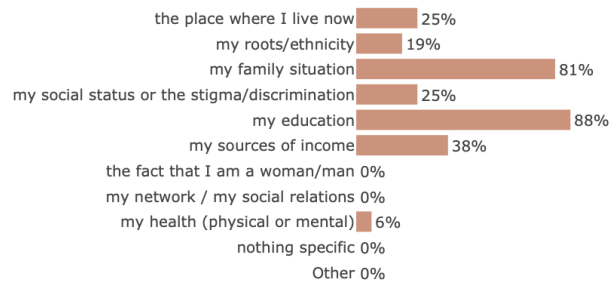


What prevents me from healing and moving forward (per gender)?

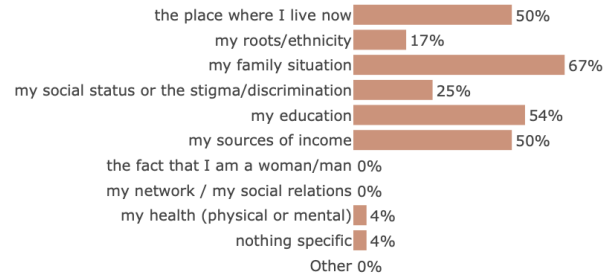
Next generation FCS

+80% of the female next generation FCS victims refer to their **family situation** and their **education**. Male next-generation victims focus more on the place where they live, their family situation, their education and their sources of income.

Female



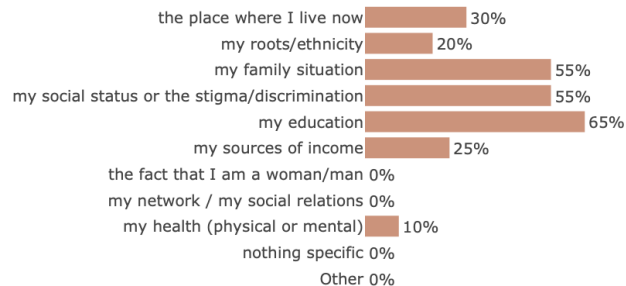
Male



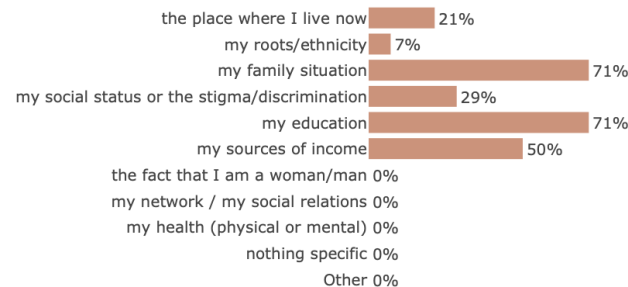
Next generation SGBC

Female next-generation SGBC victims refer mainly to their **family situation, stigma/discrimination and their education** as the main reason for not healing or moving on in life. +70% of the female next generation SGBC victims refer to their **family situation and their education, and 50% refer to their source of income**.

Female



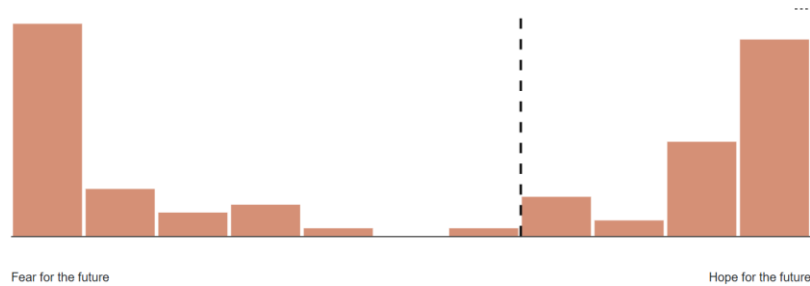
Male



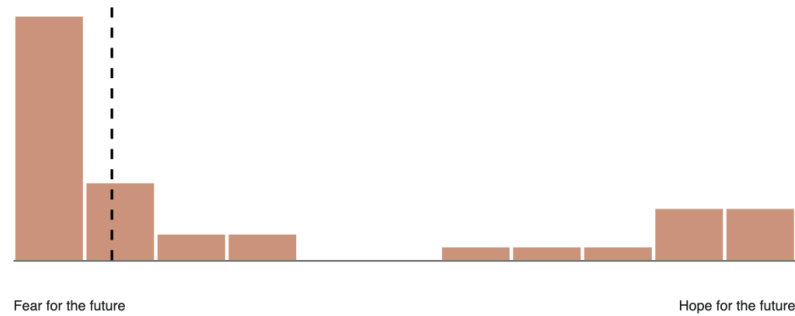
Perception about the future: fear or hope?

How do I feel about the future?

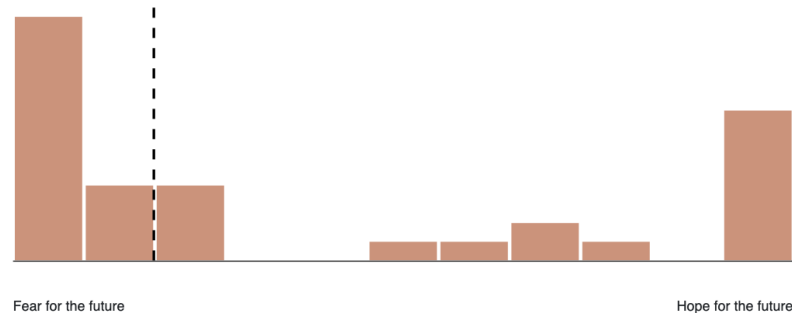
Next Generation 4 Locations



Next Generation FCS



Next Generation SGBC



Next Generation 4 Locations



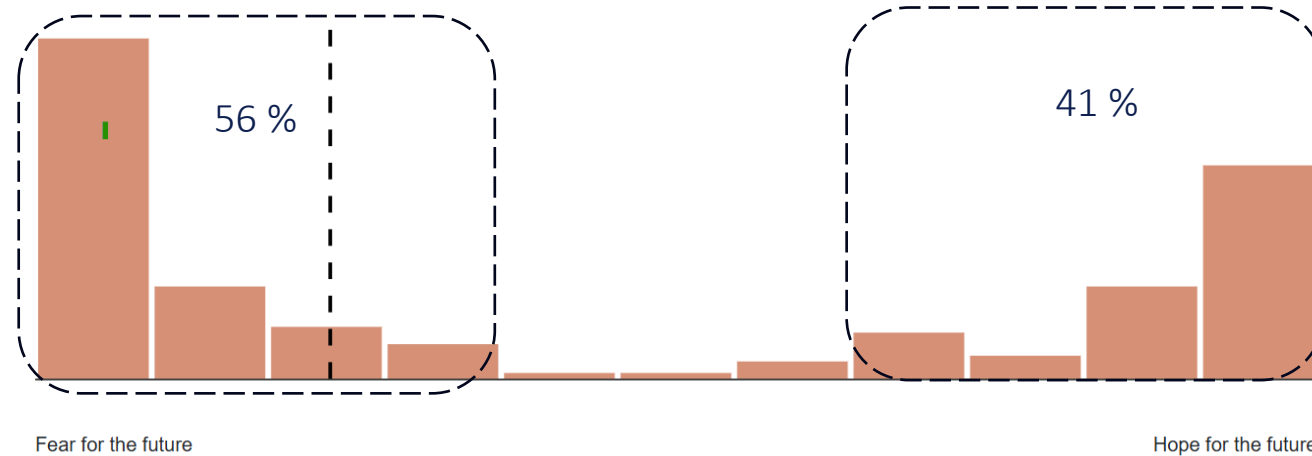
Although responses across all locations indicate a mix of fear and hope for the future, it is clear that FCS and SGBC children are more concerned about the future.

In the 4 locations, we clearly see that female next-generation victims are more hopeful about the future compared to male next-generation victims.

Regarding FCS and SGBC next generation, there are no differences based on gender.

Perception about the future

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...



What might be sources of fear for the future (based on the stories)

- **Inherited Poverty Cycles**
Children repeatedly express anxiety about being trapped in the same extreme poverty as their parents, with family resources entirely depleted by the conflict and no visible path to economic stability despite hard work.
- **Identity and Belonging Crisis / Social Rejection and Stigma**
Children of abducted mothers or former rebels express profound anxiety about not knowing their fathers, being rejected by family members, and being labeled as "rebel children" with no sense of belonging.
- **Educational Abandonment and Limited Opportunity**
Almost every testimony emphasises the heartbreak of being forced to drop out of school due to the inability to pay fees, watching peers continue their education while their own economic prospects diminish.
- **Land Insecurity and Food Uncertainty**
Many children worry about having no land to cultivate, being denied their ancestral land rights, or having insufficient resources to produce enough food, which forces them into dependence on casual labor with an unreliable income.

What might be sources of hope for the future (based on the stories)

- **Hope Through Education and Skills Training**
Despite educational challenges, many children find hope through learning skills such as tailoring, welding, building, or farming. One child expresses determination to "read and change the story of my life," while another is "grateful about the opportunity that the church has given me to learn how to build."
- **Entrepreneurial Aspirations**
Despite limited resources, several children have developed concrete business plans, including starting a mechanic's spare-parts shop, growing vegetables to sell, and dreaming of having their own welding workshop.
- **Family Bonds and Caregiving Roles**
Caring for family members gives many children a sense of purpose and identity. One boy cares for his blind mother; another supports his grandmother. "I don't want to lose focus because, as I see myself as the only son to my mother, she expects a lot from me."
- **Community Recognition and Assistance**
Several children mentioned receiving help from community members who recognised their potential. One was offered a job in a welding workshop, while another notes that people "always refer to me as a hardworking boy."

Individual/family needs to heal and rebuild lives

The stories reveal the following top 5 support needs expressed by Next Generation.

1. Education Support

Many victims express the need for school supplies, bicycles, and bursaries to continue their education. They prioritise vocational training in carpentry, joinery, and engineering, as they feel too old for formal schooling. Education is seen as a means to gain independence, support their families, and, for some, move away in search of a better future.

2. Financial/Business Support

Requests for start-up capital and business expansion support are common, along with specific equipment such as sewing and grinding machines. Many view financial stability as a means to achieve self-reliance, ensure a sustainable income, and provide for their families.

3. Land Acquisition (especially by Former Child Soldiers' and SGBC victims' children)

Victims seek land for both settlement and farming, often linking it to the need for security, stability, and a means to escape discrimination. Some express a strong desire to relocate far from their current location, while others report land grabbing, which has left them vulnerable and without a place to rebuild their lives.

4. Agriculture/Livestock

Many request oxen, ox-plows, and livestock restocking (cattle, goats, sheep) to rebuild their livelihoods. There is interest in diversifying into beekeeping, piggy, and poultry, with agricultural training seen as key to both food security and income generation. This need is closely connected to land acquisition.

5. Housing

Permanent housing, such as two-roomed houses, is a pressing need, often tied to dignity, security, and stability. Victims seek protection from theft and disturbances, with housing support frequently mentioned in overcoming discrimination and fostering healing.

Especially in the 4 locations, we also see a need for **family reconciliation support** referring to family counselling needs, addressing domestic violence issues, clan-level mediation and support for orphans.

Summary – Next Generation

These respondents were children of victims born after Ongwen's attacks. At the time of story collection, they were between 15 and 22 years old. The majority (53%) lived in the four case locations. The others were children of former child soldiers (25%) and SGBC victims (22%), most of whom resided outside their ancestral homes.

Some Next Generation respondents were born in captivity—to abducted mothers and, in some cases, abducted fathers who were forced to become child soldiers. Upon returning “from the bush” (i.e. from the time spent with Ongwen's army, they faced multiple and overlapping challenges. Many experienced stigmatisation, either because they do not know their father (in the case of SGBC children) or because their father was a rebel—whether by choice or by force.

Particularly vulnerable are boys with unknown fathers, as clan belonging in Acholi society is passed through the paternal line. Without a recognised clan, these boys have no access to land. They also struggle to marry, as they lack the possessions and income traditionally required to be considered eligible for a bride. Caught in cycles of hopelessness and despair, many Next Generation children turn to alcohol, drug abuse, suicidal attempts, early pregnancies and marriages (girls), and petty crime as a coping mechanism.

Impact on victims' lives

The stories of Next Generation victims reflect profound **struggles in education, economics, and emotions**. The main lasting impacts include:

- **Educational Disruption:** Many children of victims cannot continue their education due to financial constraints, leading to shattered aspirations and limited future prospects.
- **Economic Hardship:** Persistent poverty, food insecurity, and a lack of sustainable livelihoods force children into survival-driven activities.
- **Intergenerational Stigma & Identity Crisis:** Children born to former captives or rebels face deep discrimination, social rejection, and uncertainty about their heritage and identity.
- **Family Fragmentation and Rejection:** Many of them live with one parent, with abusive stepfathers, or with extended family, which results in insecurity, neglect, domestic violence, and displacement.
- **Land Insecurity:** Many individuals live with the consequences of land disputes, often stemming from their parents' displacement or rejection by extended family, which can lead to issues related to identity and clan belonging due to an unknown paternal lineage.

87% of the respondents indicated that what happened to them has had a severe impact on their lives or turned their lives upside down.

Across all Next Generation groups, responses indicate a mix of fear and hope for the future, with children from FCS and SGBC being more concerned about the future.

45–65% feel afraid and insecure – though there are also next-generation victims who do feel safe and secure.

Acceptance in the community

43% of next-generation victims feel unaccepted by their communities. Key barriers to acceptance include being labelled as “children of rebels” or “children without fathers” (and therefore without a clan) in extended families, particularly by step-parents, in communities, and schools.

What prevents the Next Generation from moving forward in life?

The biggest challenges preventing Next Generation victims from rebuilding their lives include: lack of education and school fees (69 %), unstable family and home situation (65%), lack of income (49%), the place where they live (29%) and stigma and discrimination in their communities (28%).

What are the needs of the Next Generation to heal and rebuild their lives?

The most pressing needs among Next Generation victims are:

- **Education Support** – Scholarships, school supplies, vocational training, and skills development.
- **Financial & Business Support** – Start-up capital, small business funding, and vocational tools.
- **Land and Agricultural Support** – Access to farmland, livestock, and agricultural training.
- **Housing & Security** – Stable living conditions to promote dignity and safety
- **Community Reconciliation** – Addressing family conflicts, discrimination, and struggles with identity.

Next Generation: proposed measures

While communities are— to varying degrees—aware of the harm caused by Ongwen’s attacks on people who personally endured the attacks on the camps, the transgenerational impact remains less well-known and understood. Children born in captivity are particularly vulnerable. In developing recovery measures, the stakeholder expert group emphasised the need for raising awareness within families and communities about the specific challenges these children face. They also highlighted the importance of supporting families and clans in integrating children who are rejected, stigmatised, or struggling with identity due to not knowing their fathers. Providing direct support to these children—both psychosocial and economic—is equally essential.

Priority Measures

Subsequent Measures

Mental health
(trauma therapy and counselling; psychosocial support)

Family reintegration counselling
(combatting family violence and transmission of violent behaviour to the next generation, land access mediation, restoration of traditional uncle role in helping orphans ...)

Mass sensitisation campaigns about Next Generation challenges
(media outreach & advocacy to promote acceptance, understand transgenerational harm and promote acceptance for stigmatised children)

Livelihood support
(income-generating activities; startup capital; financial literacy)

Access to education
(grants, support systems)

Vocational training

Peer-mentorship programmes for girls
to prevent early marriages

Cultural shift to allow clan belonging and land access for fatherless children
(working with cultural leaders to strengthen cultural mechanisms to integrate children who do not belong to a clan)

Safe spaces for belonging
Re-purpose—or add a new purpose to—existing community spaces so that children can feel safe, accepted, and affirmed

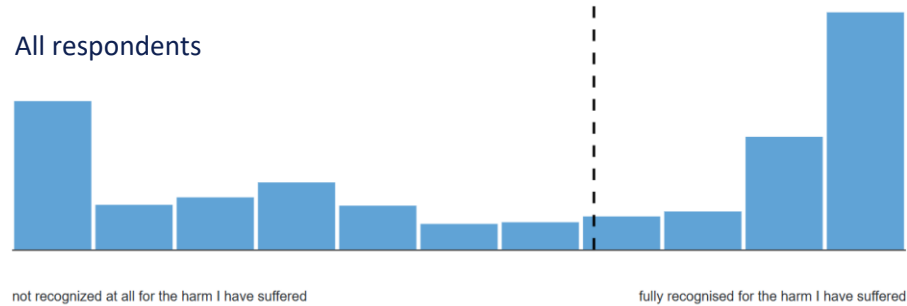


4. Perceptions on recognition for the harm suffered & justice done

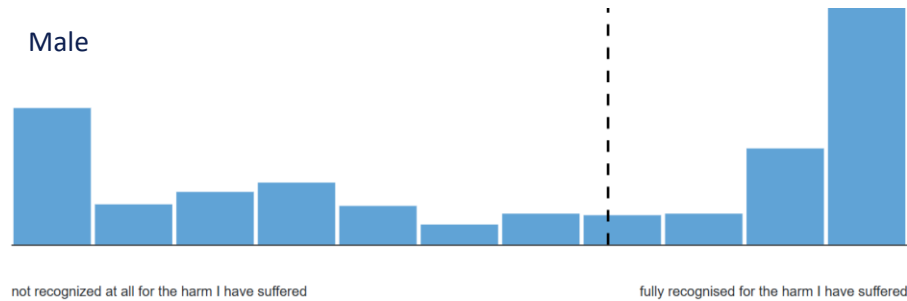
Feeling of recognition & meaning of recognition

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel

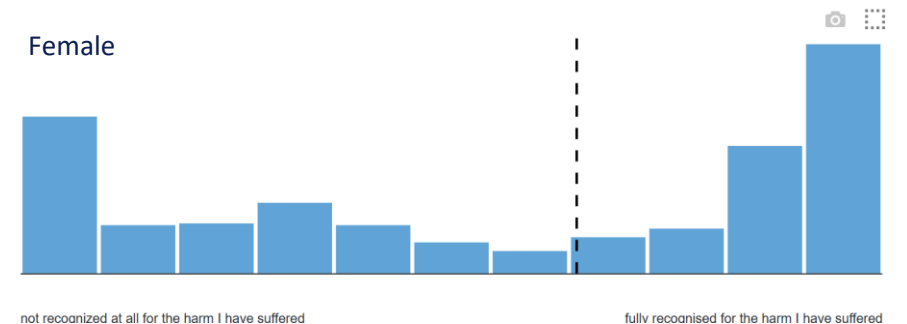
All respondents



Male



Female



Recognition is consistently understood as both **practical support AND symbolic acknowledgment**, revealed through two parallel dimensions:

- Tangible assistance (economic, educational, medical)
- Intangible recognition (dignity restoration, acceptance, and respect)

There is a need for both formal (institutional) and informal (community) recognition.

What does recognition mean for people?

The following are the key eight categories of the meaning of recognition, identified in the stories – upon being asked, ‘What does being recognised for the harm you suffered mean to you?’

(presented in the order of frequency of mention across all victim categories)

1. Economic Assistance & Material Support
2. Community Inclusion & Freedom from Stigma
3. Institutional Recognition & Justice
4. Healthcare & Treatment Access
5. Educational Opportunities
6. Family Support
7. Psychological Acknowledgment & Counseling
8. Self-Empowerment & Personal Healing

What does ‘being recognised for the harm suffered’ mean

1. Economic Assistance & Material Support

Recognition through tangible economic resources is the most frequently mentioned type of recognition across victim categories. Practical support enables basic survival and potential economic recovery (access to financial aid, business capital, land, cash grants for basic needs, housing support, and agricultural tools)

2. Community Inclusion & Freedom from Stigma

Recognition is deeply tied to social acceptance and the elimination of discriminatory treatment. Victims emphasise the importance of being treated as regular community members without being defined by their past experiences or marked by visible differences. This means being treated equally in communities, schools, and workplaces and not being subjected to derogatory names. It also includes the freedom to move without facing discrimination.

3. Institutional Recognition & Justice

Institutional acknowledgment involves formal recognition through legal and administrative channels (legal proceedings and court rulings against perpetrators, compensation certificates, reparation programs, and government-issued support documents)

4. Healthcare & Treatment Access

Healthcare recognition centres on addressing specific medical needs resulting from conflict (removal of war-related bullet fragments, treatment for rape-related complications, prosthetic limbs, ongoing health monitoring).

5. Educational Opportunities

Education is viewed as a critical pathway for future potential. Victims consistently emphasise the importance of learning opportunities, both for themselves and their children, as a key form of recognition, including school enrollment support, scholarships for secondary and university education, vocational training, free school supplies, tuition assistance, and skills development courses.

6. Family Support

Family recognition involves emotional and practical acceptance within family units (acceptance back into the family home, financial support from relatives, care during illness, help with childcare, support for children born of conflict, inheritance rights, family mediation, and unconditional emotional support)

7. Psychological Acknowledgment & Counselling

Psychological recognition focuses on emotional validation and support: being heard and provided with spaces to process their experiences (counselling sessions, group therapy, trauma and stress management workshops, mental health training, prayer sessions)

8. Self-Empowerment & Personal Healing

Recognition is also viewed as an internal process of rebuilding – reclaiming personal agency and the ability to move forward, including loving oneself and reconstructing one's personal narrative.

What does 'being recognised for the harm suffered' mean - quotes

1. Economic Assistance & Material Support

"If I get start-up capital for a business like that spare parts shop, I would believe that the government and international community has recognised the people suffering."

"Being recognized means being given money to cater to basic needs like education, health services. This money can also be used to get land elsewhere."

2. Community Inclusion & Freedom from Stigma

"Even at school, despite the fact that I am a good grade performer, I am still called a rebel's son. It is too disturbing."

"When one is not discriminated, stigmatized, abused after experiencing trauma, when people treat me normally and don't look at me differently because of my disability from the attack."

3. Institutional Recognition & Justice

"Recognition means those who abducted and exploited me are held accountable."

"When I am known as a victim of the attack by Ongwen's Sinia brigade by the government and other NGOs, when all the bullets in my body are removed and I am settled in my own land."

4. Healthcare & Treatment Access

"Being recognized means getting medical support especially for chest pain, pain in the limb, treatment from rape complications."

"I still have hope to gain my sight, so to me this means my eyes will be treated and the back and chest pain that I'm suffering from now."

5. Educational Opportunities

"It means I will be able to go to school and study and become a doctor in the future."

"When my children are given free education (scholarship) to study and advance further than I could."

6. Family Support

"When my family understands that I didn't go to the bush by choice and accepts me back without judgment."

"My husband who is HIV negative still expressed his love for me and went ahead to marry me despite my HIV positive status."

7. Psychological Acknowledgment & Counselling

"When someone gives me time to talk about my problems and listens to me as I share the difficult moments I went through."

"Recognition means getting psychological counselling to help release all the negative thoughts into realistic thoughts."

8. Self-Empowerment & Personal Healing

"Recognition should come from myself because I am accountable for my life"

"It means changing maladaptive thoughts into positive ones and spending my time in productive activities."

"When I feel strong enough to help others who went through similar experiences as mine."

Differences in the meaning of recognition – per victim group

% of stories that refer to a category of 'recognition meaning'
(when asked 'What does 'being recognised for the harm you suffered' mean to you personally?')

Recognition Meaning	Four Locations (%)	FCS (%)	SGBC (%)	Next Gen (%)
Economic Assistance & Material Support	39%	28%	17%	19%
Community Inclusion & Freedom from Stigma	24%	36%	27%	17%
Family Support	16%	29%	30%	16%
Institutional Recognition & Justice	19%	14%	11%	9%
Psychological Acknowledgment & Counseling	17%	9%	15%	8%
Educational Opportunities	13%	14%	5%	18%
Healthcare & Treatment Access	14%	5%	12%	9%
Self-Empowerment & Personal Healing	9%	3%	4%	5%

Direct Victims in 4 Locations

- **Economic Assistance Dominates:** The most frequently mentioned need, underscoring the importance of financial support and material stability.
- **Institutional Recognition and Justice Valued:** A stronger emphasis on formal justice mechanisms and acknowledgment by institutions compared to other victim groups.

Former Child Soldiers (FCS)

- **Social Reintegration is Key:** The primary focus is on being accepted back into the community and overcoming the stigma associated with it.
- **Family as a Support Structure:** A significant recognition need, emphasising the role of family in rebuilding lives.

Sexual and Gender-Based Crime victims (SGBC)

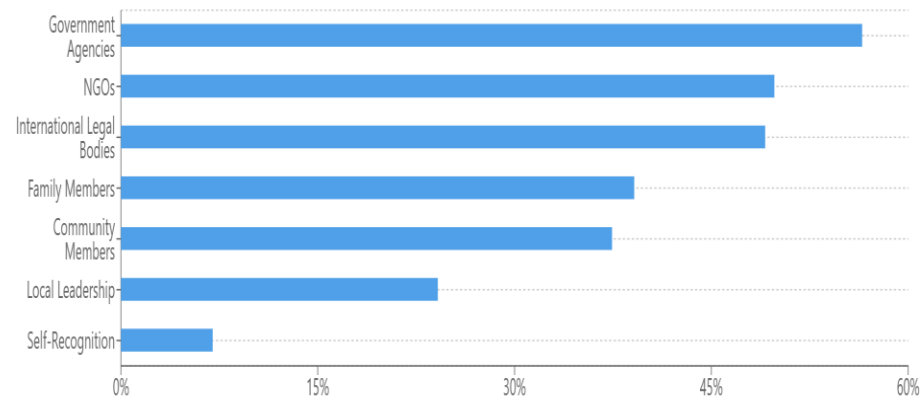
- **Recognition Through Family and Community:** The most substantial emphasis is placed on family support and community inclusion as crucial aspects of healing and validation.

Next Generation

- **Education as a Pathway Forward** (beyond economic assistance): The most frequently mentioned recognition need (compared to other victim groups), signalling a focus on future opportunities.

Where recognition is expected to come from

% of stories that refer to a category of 'recognition agent'
(when asked 'Who does recognition need to come from?')



The main agents expected to receive recognition are institutions, followed by family and community members (see right).

Smaller numbers of mentions include **(6) Local Leadership** (local authorities, clan leaders, religious leaders, local chiefs), **(7) Self-Recognition** (personal acknowledgment and internal validation) and **(8) Other Stakeholders** (private individuals, school administrators, healthcare providers, and spontaneous support groups without formal affiliations).

1. Government Agencies

Official state bodies at local and national levels are responsible for formal support, policy implementation, and systemic recognition. Includes local authorities, district officials, national government representatives, and public service institutions.

Frequency: Consistently top-ranking across multiple datasets

"Recognition should come from the government of Uganda because we are its citizens."

3. NGOs & Aid Organisations

Non-governmental humanitarian organisations providing targeted support, counseling, rehabilitation, and recognition services. Includes local and international humanitarian groups specialising in conflict recovery.

Frequency: Consistently significant across all groups

"Recognition should come from non-governmental organisations who have been coming to our community."

3. International Legal Bodies

Formal international justice institutions focused on legal accountability, reparations, and international-level recognition. Primary actors include the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Trust Fund for Victims, and other international judicial mechanisms.

Frequency: Prominent across victim categories

"Recognition needs to come from ICC because they have already done good in arresting Ongwen."

4. Family Members

Immediate and extended family providing emotional, material, and social support. Includes parents, siblings, spouses, children, and extended relatives, who are crucial in personal reintegration.

Frequency: Critically important, especially in Sexual and Gender-Based Conflict narratives

"Recognition should first come from my family because if they showed me love and protected me, then even the outside community would accept me."

5. Community Members

Local residents, neighbours, and informal social networks providing social acceptance, informal support, and community-level reintegration. Represents the broader social ecosystem beyond immediate family.

Frequency: Significant but variable across groups

"Recognition needs to come from the community members because they are the people I live with."

Who does recognition need to come from – key agents per victim group

All 4 Locations

1. **Government Agencies:** Dominant recognition source
2. **International Legal Bodies:** Strong formal institutional presence
3. **NGOs & Aid Organizations:** Significant support role
4. **Family Members:** Moderate emotional support
5. **Community Members:** Local social integration

This group primarily expect recognition from Government Agencies and International Legal Bodies, viewing these as ultimate sources of official validation. They seek comprehensive institutional acknowledgment that addresses systemic injustices. NGOs are seen as critical intermediaries, while Family Members and Community Members are expected to provide emotional and social support.

Former Child Soldiers (FCS)

1. **Family Members:** Highest priority for recognition
2. **NGOs:** Critical support mechanism
3. **Government Agencies:** Moderate institutional involvement
4. **Community Members:** Social reintegration focus
5. **International Legal Bodies:** Less prominent

Family Members emerge as the most critical expected source of recognition. Victims emphasise the need for familial acceptance and understanding. NGOs are viewed as essential support providers, offering educational and psychological assistance. Government Agencies are expected to provide structured support, while International Legal Bodies are seen as secondary in importance.

Sexual and Gender-Based Conflict (SGBC)

1. **Family Members:** Crucial recognition source
2. **International Legal Bodies:** Strong justice focus
3. **NGOs:** Targeted support
4. **Government Agencies:** Moderate institutional involvement
5. **Community Members:** Social acceptance
6. **Local Leadership:** Uniquely strong mention (under Local leadership category)

Family Members become the most critical expected source of recognition, with a complex emphasis on acceptance of both mothers and children. International Legal Bodies are strongly likely to provide accountability and justice. NGOs are anticipated to offer specialised, nuanced support. Government Agencies are expected to provide targeted health and social services.

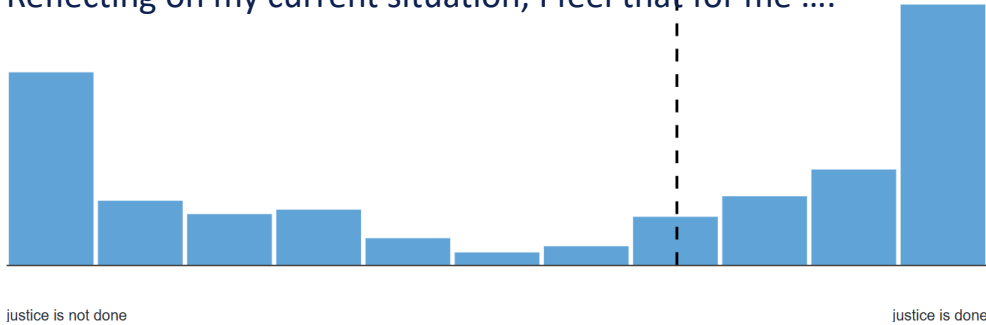
Next Generation

1. **Government Agencies:** Continued institutional focus
2. **NGOs:** Significant support role
3. **Family Members:** Evolving recognition dynamics
4. **Community Members:** Social integration
5. **International Legal Bodies:** Growing importance

Government Agencies are expected to take primary responsibility for recognition, particularly in creating future opportunities. NGOs are anticipated to provide targeted support and intervention. Family Members are seen as crucial for emotional validation, with an increasing expectation of comprehensive support. International Legal Bodies are viewed as growing in importance for long-term justice.

Feeling of justice & meaning of justice

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel that for me



The following are the 7 key categories of the meaning of justice, identified in the stories – upon being asked: ‘When do you feel that justice has been done?’ (presented in the order of frequency of mention across all victim categories)

1. Compensation and Reparations

- Financial support for rebuilding lives and regaining stability.
- Compensation for lost property, livestock, land, and household items.
- Education support for children, including school fees and scholarships.
- Funds to start businesses or engage in livelihood activities.
- Fair and transparent distribution of reparations to all affected victims.
- Concern over bias in victim support programs, with calls for fair allocation of benefits.

2. Legal Accountability

- Ongwen’s conviction and sentencing are widely recognised as justice.
- Some feel his punishment should have been harsher (life imprisonment or the death penalty).
- Others recognise Ongwen as both a victim and a perpetrator, given his own abduction.
- Continued demand for the prosecution of other LRA leaders, particularly Joseph Kony.
- Desire for judicial transparency and ensuring that cases are judged fairly.
- Holding all perpetrators accountable

3. Reconciliation and Healing

- Community reintegration and acceptance, particularly for former abductees and children born in captivity.
- Ending discrimination and stigma against victims, especially “rebel children.”
- Traditional reconciliation processes, such as Mato Oput, for restoring harmony.
- Psychological support and trauma counseling are seen as critical justice measures.
- Calls for forgiveness processes and structured reconciliation efforts.

4. Rehabilitation and Sustainable Livelihoods

- Healthcare and medical treatment, especially for war-related injuries and trauma.
- Mental health support for survivors of war and gender-based violence.
- Housing support, including land restoration and home construction.
- Vocational training and employment opportunities to ensure financial independence.
- Support for disabled victims, including assistive devices and livelihood programs.

5. Peace and Security

- The ability to live safely in their homes without fear of future attacks.
- Preventing similar conflicts through long-term security measures
- Ensuring that war never returns and that younger generations do not suffer the same fate.

6. Recognition and Inclusion

- Feeling heard and validated—justice means having their stories acknowledged.
- Justice is achieved when victims' voices are considered in decision-making regarding reparations and community programs.
- Victims’ views being collected, consulted, and respected in court hearings and public processes.

7. Justice as Fair Distribution of Benefits

- A desire for fairness in reparation processes—not just compensating some but ensuring that all victims benefit.
- Frustration over unequal access to aid and development programs.
- Calls for transparent monitoring of victim support programs to prevent corruption.
- Justice includes equity in compensation based on each victim's level of loss and suffering.

Differences in the meaning of justice – per victim group

Justice takes on distinct meanings depending on the lived experiences of each victim group. While there are common themes, each group emphasises unique dimensions of justice based on their historical and personal contexts.

The following are the key 7 categories of the meaning of justice identified in the stories (presented in the order of frequency of mention across all victim categories)

Justice Category	4 Locations (Direct victims)	FCS	SGBC	Next Gen
Compensation & Reparations	36%	24%	24%	16%
Legal Accountability	26%	38%	32%	19%
Rehabilitation & Livelihoods	19%	16%	20%	30%
Reconciliation & Healing	14%	19%	22%	18%
Peace & Security	9%	29%	28%	11%
Recognition & Inclusion	11%	12%	13%	18%
Fair Distribution	7%	7%	9%	8%

% of stories that refer to a category of 'the meaning of justice'
(when asked, 'When do you feel that justice has been done?')

4 Locations

For the direct victims in 4 locations (alive at the time of attacks), justice is primarily about **compensation and material repair of harm**. This includes receiving **compensation for lost property, education, and livelihoods**, followed by seeing **perpetrators held legally accountable**. While **rehabilitation and sustainable livelihoods** are meaningful, reconciliation and healing often play a less prominent role. Recognition, peace and security, and fair distribution of benefits, while present, are less emphasised in their understanding of justice.

Former Child Soldiers (FCS)

For FCS, justice is primarily about **legal accountability and security**. **Peace and the ability to live without fear** represent fundamental aspects of their understanding of justice. **Compensation and reparations**, alongside **reconciliation and healing**, form another important layer of their justice conception. While rehabilitation and recognition are necessary, they take a backseat to other aspects of justice in their narratives.

Victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes (SGBC)

Justice is firmly centred on **legal accountability** and the pursuit of **peace and security**. **Compensation and reparations** also play a significant role in their understanding of justice. **Reconciliation, healing, and rehabilitation** form important secondary themes, suggesting a balanced view of justice that encompasses both punitive and restorative elements. Recognition and fair distribution, while present, are less emphasised in their justice narratives.

Next Generation victims

For Next Gen, justice is primarily about **rehabilitation and sustainable livelihoods**, reflecting their focus on future opportunities. **Legal accountability, reconciliation, and recognition** form equally important secondary themes in their understanding of justice. Compensation and reparations are less emphasised than in other groups, while peace, security, and fair distribution play more minor roles, suggesting their focus is more on forward-looking elements of justice.

Proposed impact domains to guide long-term reparation success

Based on how justice was defined across the 1002 stories, the stakeholder expert group developed a draft set of impact domains to guide the tracking of long-term reparation success.

Impact domain	Description	Based on...
Legal Justice and Fairness	Legal accountability for perpetrators; fair, transparent, and equitable distribution of reparations	Victims seek justice through courts and also demand fairness in how compensation is distributed
Physical and Psychological Recovery	Improved physical and mental well-being; trauma support; access to counselling and healing services	Justice tied to restoring health and dignity
Personal Agency and Empowerment	Rebuilding confidence, autonomy, and the ability to make life decisions	Seen as vital for long-term healing and resilience, especially in narratives around self-recognition
Sustainable Livelihoods	Access to income-generating opportunities, vocational training, land	A recurring justice need; supports economic recovery
Intergenerational Justice	Restoration of education, identity, and opportunity for children—especially those of FCS/SGBC victims	Children face stigma, exclusion, and poverty; education seen as a core justice need
Social Reintegration	Reintegration and acceptance within families and communities; reduced stigma	Core theme across SGBC and FCS stories; essential for recovery and dignity
Safety, Security, and Social Cohesion	Freedom from fear; prevention of future harm; peaceful coexistence and community healing	Justice includes feeling safe, hopeful about the future, and living in harmony again
Recognition and Inclusion	Having voices heard; being consulted in decisions; symbolic and social acknowledgment	Justice seen not only in action but in acknowledgment—by institutions, families, and communities



5. Final remarks on reparation measures as expressed by victims and stakeholder expert group

Remarks shared by victims at the end of narrative inquiry process

Urgency of Reparations

An overwhelming sense of urgency pervades the statements of victims, with repeated pleas for immediate action. They express deep concern about the lengthy process since 2015, with many elderly and sick victims fearing they will die before receiving any support. The consistent message is “help us while we’re still alive,” highlighting the desperate need for the swift implementation of reparation programs.

Trust & Corruption

There is profound distrust in local leadership and government structures, with victims explicitly preferring NGO-managed support. They share specific experiences of corruption and express fears about funds being misappropriated. Many victims state that “only NGOs deliver true service” and worry that any support channeled through local leaders will not reach the intended beneficiaries.

Psychological Impact

Victims describe ongoing psychological struggles, including depression, trauma, and social isolation. Many report being seen as “mad” or unstable by their communities. The quotes reveal deep emotional wounds that haven’t healed, with victims describing crying during interviews, showing visible signs of distress, and expressing a desperate need for professional psychological support.

Social Stigma

Former abductees and their children face severe discrimination within their communities. They report being called “rebels” or “killers,” with children born in captivity facing particular challenges. The stigma affects their daily lives, relationships, and ability to integrate into community life, creating a persistent sense of otherness and exclusion.

Medical Needs

Physical health issues resulting from war injuries remain untreated due to a lack of resources and accessible healthcare facilities. Victims describe specific medical conditions, including mobility issues, chronic pain, and need for surgeries, emphasizing that previous medical support programs were insufficient or stopped before addressing all needs.

Memory & Recognition

Victims emphasise the importance of creating permanent memorials and documentation of their experiences. They want their suffering acknowledged and preserved for future generations, suggesting the establishment of memorial sites and museums and formal recognition of what happened. This reflects a desire for their experiences to be validated and remembered.

Support Delivery Method

There is an apparent tension between individual- and community-based support approaches. Most victims prefer direct, individual support, citing concerns about fairness and accessibility. They emphasise the need for transparent processes and express skepticism about community-managed programs, fearing inequitable distribution.

Land Issues

Post-conflict land disputes are a significant concern, particularly regarding property rights after displacement. Victims describe conflicts over boundaries, difficulties accessing cultivation land, and challenges with neighbors who encroached on their property during their absence. They emphasise the need for formal conflict resolution mechanisms.

Education Support

Educational needs focus particularly on support for children and youth who dropped out due to conflict. Victims request assistance with school fees, vocational training opportunities, and support for young people whose education was disrupted by war. They see education as crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty.

Resilience

Despite overwhelming challenges, many victims express remarkable resilience, often rooted in faith and spirituality. They draw strength from their religious beliefs, maintain hope for the future, and find support within their communities. Their statements reflect a determination to survive and improve their situations despite adverse circumstances.

Remarks shared by stakeholder expert group

Perspective on symbolic payment

The **symbolic payment** (expected to be 750 EUR per person) acknowledges harm, improves mental health, and empowers victims to meet urgent needs while strengthening trust in the reparations.

However, risks include **misuse of funds, family tensions, lack of confidentiality, gender-based violence, and asset seizure**, especially in patriarchal and rural contexts. Uncertain payment timelines further threaten trust.

To maximise impact and minimise harm, payments should not stand alone. They must be accompanied by mental preparation, financial literacy, and family counselling—integrated with rehabilitation measures to support sustainable recovery.

Suggested sequencing of rehabilitation and symbolic satisfaction measures

Based on an understanding of victims' needs, a general sequencing pattern is emerging that can be adapted across different victim groups. However, the specific needs of each group—and as much as possible, of each individual—should be taken into account. There must be sufficient flexibility to respond to real-life situations.

Symbolic measures, such as memorials, prayers, and public apologies, can also take place early in the process. These actions signal to the community that reparations are underway and can help strengthen social cohesion. In doing so, they also help create a more receptive environment for subsequent measures, such as destigmatization efforts.

Highest priority measures appear on the left; relative priority decreases towards the right

Addressing trauma
(psychological and psychosocial support, cleansing – for individuals, families and groups)

Addressing stigma
(awareness raising of care providers on the psychological impact of crimes on mental health of victim)

Physical rehabilitation
(surgeries, prosthetics, treatment, physiotherapy ...)

Community healing
(traditional healing ceremonies, dialogue forums, bylaws, safe spaces ...)

Socioeconomic measures
(income-generating activities, access to education and vocational training)

Community sensitisation
(land access, stigma, parental roles)

Memorialisation and peacebuilding
(monuments, dialogue processes, apologies ...)

Remarks shared by stakeholder expert group

The stakeholder expert group identified critical measures required to heal and restore communities affected by Ongwen's crimes that fall outside the scope of the Reparations Order. Instead, they lie squarely within the responsibility of the Government of Uganda.

Below are the key recommendations for direct government involvement.

Legal measures and formal acknowledgement of harm

- **Government Acknowledgement and Apology:** The government should formally acknowledge past violations and issue a public apology to victims and affected communities.
- **Legal Aid for Land Reclamation:** Provide legal support through national legal aid service providers to assist individuals and communities in reclaiming their land.
- **Access to Formal Social Services for FCS and SGBC Victims:** Ensure that victims of sexual and gender-based violence and former child soldiers have access to appropriate national support services.
- **Identity Issues for Children Born In Captivity:** Address legal and social identity challenges affecting children born to victims of captivity and sexual violence.
- **Reburials:** Facilitate dignified reburials, enabling families and communities to honour the deceased properly.

Social services and well-being

- **Family Reunification:** Establish programmes to support the reunification of families separated by conflict.
- **Tracing of Missing Persons:** Strengthen efforts to locate and identify individuals still missing as a result of the conflict.
- **Trauma Training for Service Providers:** Provide trauma-informed training for educators, healthcare professionals, security personnel, and police officers to enhance support for victims.

Education and economic opportunities

- **Scholarships for Higher Education:** Provide targeted scholarships to enable victims and affected children—particularly girls—to pursue further education.
- **Construction of Vocational Schools:** Invest in vocational training institutions to enhance skills development and improve employability among affected populations.
- **Revision of The National Curriculum to Reflect History:** Ensure that Uganda's national education curriculum includes an accurate and inclusive account of the conflict.

Infrastructure development and access to services

- **Establishment of Rehabilitation Centres:** Set up and maintain facilities that provide psychological and physical rehabilitation for victims.
- **Construction of Hospitals and Health Centres:** Improve access to healthcare by building new hospitals and health centres in conflict-affected areas.
- **Upgrading and Equipping Health Facilities:** Enhance existing health infrastructure by supplying adequate equipment, staffing, and essential resources.
- **Construction of Community Centres and Markets:** Build community hubs and marketplaces to foster economic revitalisation and strengthen social cohesion.



6. Baseline indicators

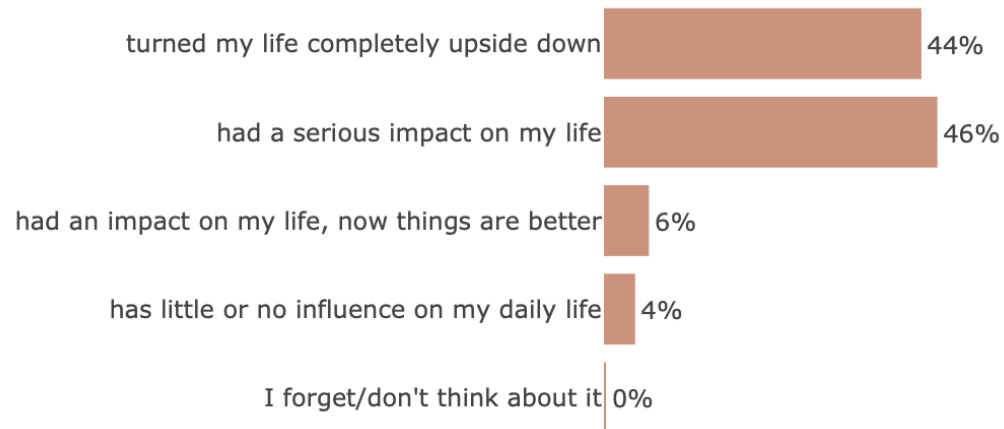
Baseline indicators

The following narrative-based indicators can be used to understand the impact of the reparation measures implemented during the programme's lifespan. The indicators are illustrated here with the results of the entire respondent group.

Level of impact until today

This indicator provides insights into the effects of the harm suffered from the attacks to date. The assumption is that through the lifespan of the reparation programme, the impact of the attacks on the victim's daily life decreases over time.

The harm suffered during the attacks

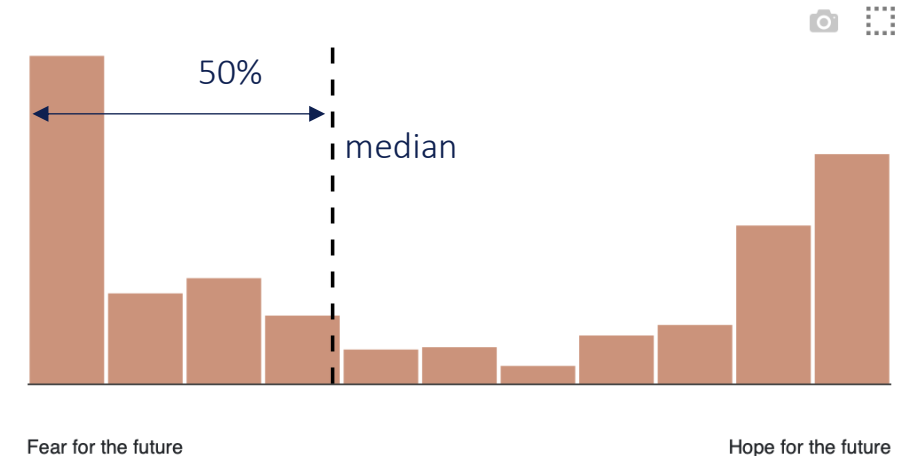


Baseline situation across all victims (n=1002)

Feelings towards the future

This indicator provides insights into how victims perceive their future. Do they look with fear or hope towards the future? The assumption is that throughout the lifespan of the reparation programme, victims are more hopeful about the future.

How do I feel about the future?



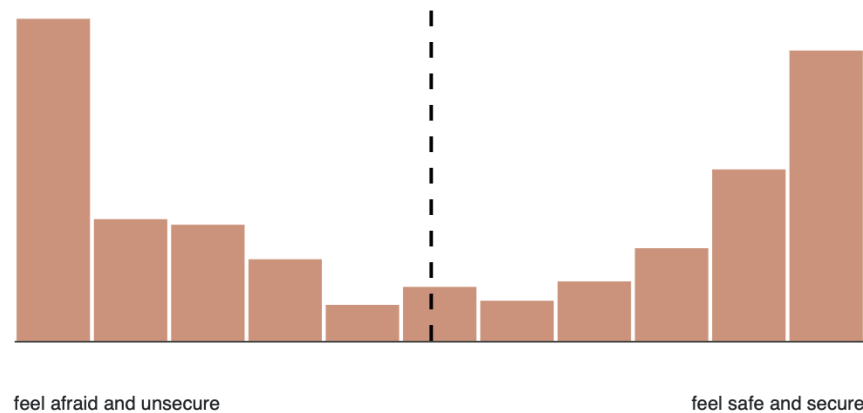
Baseline situation across all victims (n=1002)

Baseline indicators

Feeling of security

This indicator provides insights into how safe and secure victims feel at the moment of inquiry. The assumption is that through the lifespan of the reparation programme, we observe an increased feeling of safety and security.

Based on what I shared in my story, I ...

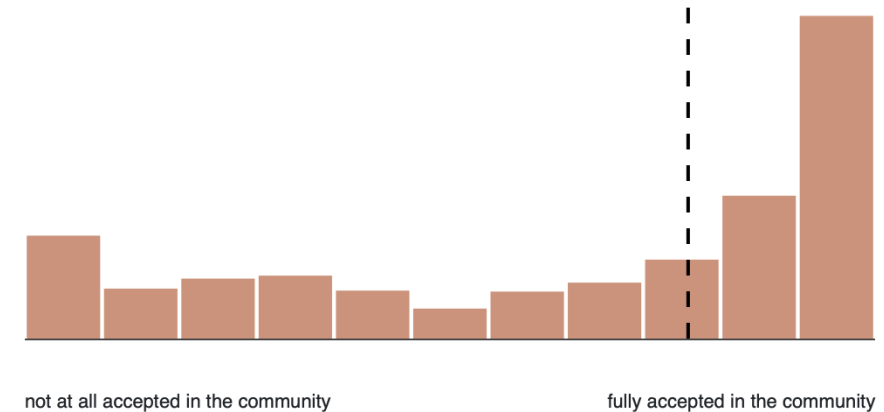


Baseline situation across all victims (n=1002)

Feeling of acceptance in the community

This indicator provides insights into how victims feel that they are accepted in the community. The assumption is that through the lifespan of the reparation programme, victims feel more accepted in the community.

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...



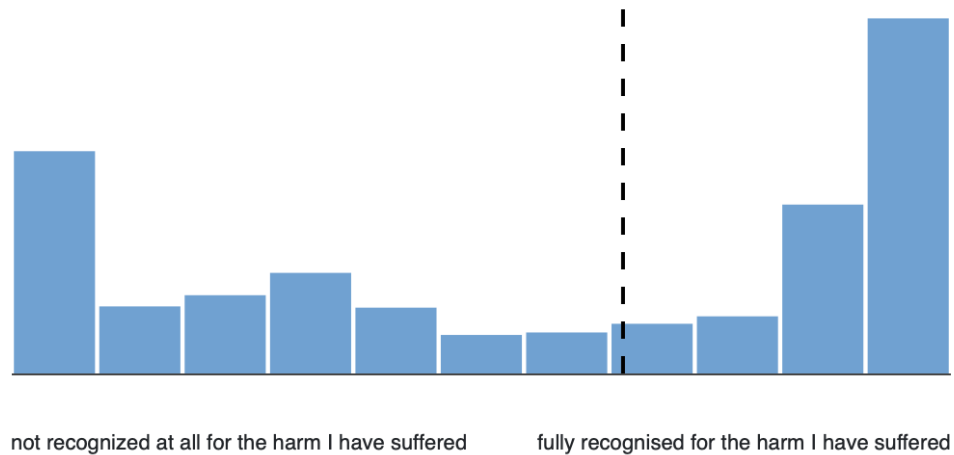
Baseline situation across all victims (n=1002)

Baseline indicators

Level of recognition for the harm done

This indicator provides insights into how well victims feel recognised for the harm that was done to them. The assumption is that throughout the lifespan of the reparation programme, victims feel more recognised for the harm done.

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel ...

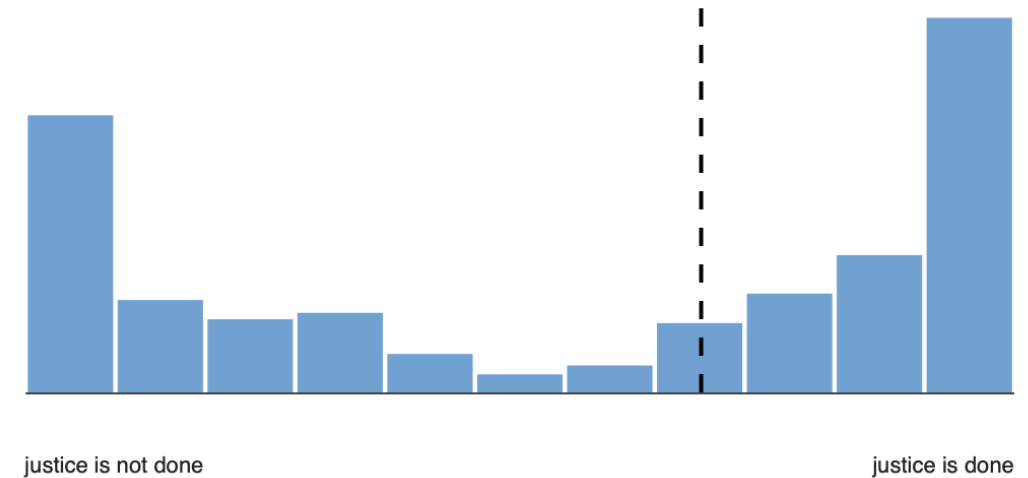


Baseline situation across all victims (n=1002)

Level of justice done

This indicator provides insights into how well victims feel justice was done for them. The assumption is that throughout the lifespan of the reparation programme, victims feel that more justice has been done for them.

Reflecting on my current situation, I feel that for me ...



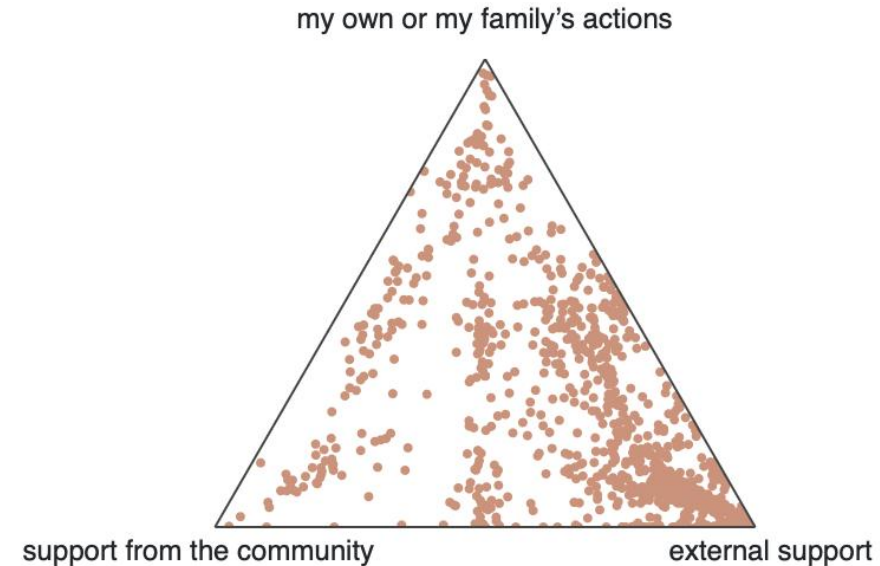
Baseline situation across all victims (n=1002)

Baseline indicators

Who is critical to the improvements you aspire to?

This indicator provides insights into which actors are seen as critical in the victim's life when considering future aspirations. The assumption is that throughout the lifespan of the reparation programme, victims feel less dependent on external support in achieving future improvements and that there is a shift towards their own actions and support from the community.

The improvements you aspire for the future depend on



Baseline situation across all victims (n=1002)

"It was on 10/10/2003 when the rebel came and attacked our camp, I was just 12 years old, I was abducted and taken from my family by the LRA during a nighttime raid, I was tasked to carry 10 kilograms of salt, slapped, threatened to be killed, i was thrust into a brutal world where survival meant obedience. After 6 months in the bush, I was trained to carry a weapon, taught to fight, and forced to commit atrocities against my own people. After 3 years as a soldier, one of the senior elders advise me and we were able to escape and reported in the barrack at Kitgum with our gun and later handed to world vision for rehabilitation. In returning back I found when all my family members killed; land was taken by uncle; I could not back to school because of the psychological I went through; the trauma of being a child soldier left deep scars in my life; I am being haunted by nightmares of the things I was forced to do and the violence I witnessed which sometimes give me a sleepless night."



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