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Part Four

4. Conclusions

The study was an attempt to capture the perceptions of Ugandans on issues related to national identity and unity aimed at generating debate and discussions about national unity and reconciliation by the general public. Views and opinions of youth men and elders of all socio- economic and geographical backgrounds were sought and analysed and the following conclusions were arrived at:

Uganda is still in a state of transition from an ancestry based identity to one national identity. The study also notes that perceptions on national identity are influenced by their level of exposure and civic values as well as the degree of integration of naturalised Ugandans.

Group perceptions and social memory contribute significantly to disunity in Uganda. The study takes note of the fact that inter-ethnic perceptions are influenced by number of factors such as distance between one ethnic group from another, the level of social interaction between different ethnic groups, experience of conflict between ethnic groups, oral and social memory. The study also concludes that political inclusion, fair distribution of economic resources and security are the most important factors for resolving conflicts and prompting unity in the country.

Part Five

Areas for Further Investigation

It is our recommendation that a study on national identity alone may not be sufficient to promote debate on the need for reconciliation. The following areas may require further investigations and/or interventions

- Establish the need for national identity cards and national language and people views about this.
- Documentation of the history of Uganda. The process should involve wide consultation and participation of a cross section of Ugandans of different age groups

As unfair distribution of economic resources throughout the country has brought about a strong sentiment of marginalisation and discrimination, there is need for the government to genuinely address economic regional disparities. Particularly, in areas adversely affected by conflict, limited health and education services, areas where dwindling sources of income become directly rationalized in terms of a deliberate state policy for marginalizing certain groups, which carries serious risks for further disunity. Hence, there is urgent need to put in place affirmative policies for Ugandans in areas adversely affected by the conflict. Among these policies could be free education for children and young people affected by the war, tax cuts/waivers for affected people, quotas established for conflict affected students for state-sponsorship into state universities.

**Government should put programmes that develop all regions of the country.
(Mbarara, Elder)**

Several young focus group members have brought up the issue of discrimination on tribal grounds in the education system. Given the disparities between different regions as well as the disparities between the qualities of education in these regions, young focus group members highlighted the need for affirmative action in education in the form of bursaries so as to overcome the feeling of marginalisation and discrimination felt among the youth in disadvantaged areas of the country. Work place was also identified as a major area of discrimination on tribal grounds; several focus group members recommended strengthening recruitment systems based on merit.

3.4.3 Peace and Security

Almost all focus groups in the north and east of the country responded to the question about reconciliation with emphasis on the need to establish peace and security as both a way for and a pre-requisite to any meaningful reconciliation. Among those who raised the significance of peace in relation to reconciliation, most expressed the need for dialogue and peace in northern Uganda while some others argued for the need for an international intervention to end the war. Interestingly and quite sadly, almost all the groups that brought up the need to end the conflict in northern Uganda as a way for unity and reconciliation were from northern Uganda.

Disarmament of Karimojong was another recommendation to support unity and allow for reconciliation. All of those focus groups that mentioned the disarmament as a security issue directly related to unity and reconciliation were from eastern Uganda.

Finally, a significant number of focus group members mentioned prayers and religion as the way forward for establishing unity and promoting forgiveness for reconciliation in Uganda.

etc.), as well as identifying and documenting differences in the same cultural institutions and ceremonies (such as weddings, family structure, reconciliation, funerals, totems etc.). Findings and documentation from such a joint effort could then be disseminated through TV and radio documentaries, newspapers, comic books for primary schools, and video documentaries.

Other possible institutions and actors that were mentioned by focus group members as leaders for reconciliation were religious institutions and political leaders.

***Churches should be used as training grounds for reconciliation.
(Mbarara, Local Leader)***

3.3.7 Mechanisms for Reconciliation

Only a handful of the focus group members and key informants were able to suggest mechanisms for reconciliation, as opposed to activities or policy changes. Dialogues on reconciliation were one of such recommendations whereby a series of dialogues would be organized at district and national levels to give voice to people's opinions on the issue of reconciliation. The study team also considers grassroots dialogue on unity and reconciliation to guarantee that ordinary Ugandans are the ones to choose and own any activity, mechanism or policy introduced for this purpose. Grassroots dialogues are also necessary to share with ordinary Ugandans experiences from other countries on national reconciliation so that they can make informed decisions and advocate for them.

Reconciliation committee was another mechanism recommended by focus group members. Interestingly, both of the individuals who recommended it emphasized the need to have regional committees as opposed to national ones; one being a young man in Bushenyi and the other an elder clan leader in Lira.

***What's needed is regional reconciliation because if we say national, that would mean all tribes are taking arms and spears against each other. But we do not need to reconcile with Baganda or Banyoro. We need to reconcile with our neighbors, with Acholi, Madi and Iteso. Let us talk about regional and not national.
(Lira, Clan Leader)***

3.4 Governance and Distribution of Resources and Peace

3.4.1 Political Inclusion

Recommendations of focus group members and key informants related to political inclusion fall under three main themes: (1) Democracy and Political Rights; (2) Good Governance; and (3) Power Sharing in the form of Federalism, Rotation in Government or Region/Tribe based representation in the Government.

3.4.2 Distribution of Resources

Recommendations of focus group members and key informants that are relevant to the issue of distribution of resources fall under two main topics: (1) Regional equality, (2) Overcoming discrimination and affirmative action

sensitisation activities, media and local leaders to install in their children values of unity, civic nationalism and co-existence.

Shaping of parents is very important. Parents should take the responsibility of bringing up their children as all Ugandans.

3.3.4 Opportunities for Interaction with Fellow Ugandans

Several different activities were recommended by focus group members to create opportunities for interaction with fellow Ugandans. Based on the recognition that unity could be strengthened only if people learn about and understand each other, interacting with fellow Ugandans in different parts of the country was highlighted by several focus groups. Among specific activities recommended were:

- (1) Joint development projects between neighbouring tribes to bring communities together and close the social gap between them;
- (2) Inter-cultural exchange programs;
- (3) Intermarriages;
- (4) Inter-tribal dialogues;
- (5) Increased trade and business

Have exchange visits within and outside the country to help us appreciate one another.

3.3.5 Media

As mentioned in the previous section of the report, media plays a tremendous role in shaping current perceptions of Ugandans, as well their social memories of tomorrow. There is significant experience from other parts of the world for utilizing local and national media for building national unity and promoting reconciliation. Considering the level of influence of particularly local radio stations on people's views, there is great potential for working with media for unity and reconciliation.

3.3.6 Cultural Leaders and Elders Working for Reconciliation

Many of the focus group members identified cultural leaders and elders as the appropriate body for reconciliation.

There is need to bring together cultural and opinion leaders to change attitudes and create peace in the communities.
(Gulu, Youth)

We can have inter-tribal meetings with cultural leaders who should later talk to people in their communities to stop conflicts.
(Arua, Man)

Based on the findings and recommendations from focus groups, the study team proposes cultural leaders and anthropologists to work together in finding a set of cultural features that are common to all Ugandans (such as hospitality, strong family ties, respect for elders, importance of nature in Ugandan cultures

As discussed in the previous section of the report, conflict plays a substantial role in shaping the perceptions of groups about other groups, and often creating lines of division and Marginalisation. Particularly in the case of the conflict in northern Uganda, most Ugandans do not have a comprehensive understanding of the causes or the effects of the conflict. The information they get through radio programs and word of mouth is scanty and often misleading. Hence, most focus group members outside of northern and eastern Uganda failed to recognize the northern Uganda conflict as a major issue; they identified it as a tribal conflict and did not mention it as part of the discussions on reconciliation.

We need awareness and sensitization campaigns to educate people about the fact that we are not Kony and we are also suffering the same way that they are.

Consequently, sensitisation about the conflict in northern Uganda is necessary given the divisive potential of unawareness in such situations.

3.3.2 Formal Education:

Based on the background discussion on the role of formal education presented in the previous section of the report, the study team recommends:

- Identification of attributes (cultural, social and moral) that are common to all Ugandans and build a comprehensive strategy to utilize these attributes for reconstructing the perceptions of Ugandans on the Ugandan nation and fellow Ugandans;
- Revising or re-writing of text books for primary and secondary schools based on a new perspective of history, culture and national identity that is free of unscientific tribalistic myths and inter-tribal wars. Such a perspective would focus on the common historical, cultural and value-based elements that link the people of this country to each other through shared experiences and goals. Similarly, tribal representation in the texts; both the imagery used and the equality of images would be changed.
- Reviewing the education policy on admission to enable equal opportunity to all Ugandan students, as well as affirmative action for students from disadvantaged areas. Admission into secondary and tertiary schools could be organized in a way to encourage students to leave their home areas and spend time in different parts of Uganda.

3.3.3 Role of the Family

A number of focus group members emphasized the education in the family and community as central to creating a new generation of Ugandans as opposed to new generations of different tribes. Families could be encouraged through

3.2.2 National language

National language was recommended by some of the focus group members as another way to strengthen unity and civic national identity. Neighbouring Kenya and Tanzania were given as evidence for the unifying potential of a national language, yet there was not a consensus on the language that could be established as the national one.

While Swahili and Luganda were mentioned as possible national languages by certain focus group members, they were rejected strongly by others.

Swahili was rebuffed especially in Buganda, as a national language because they argued it was a language used by the soldiers who killed them during the Luweero Triangle war. Luganda was also rebuffed as a national language based on its potential to marginalize non-Baganda in the country and hence, cause tension and conflict. The general recommendations however point to the need to make Swahili a national language. This should be taken cautiously with adequate time and resources committed to the process if it is to succeed.

For us we cannot use that language. It is a language for the murderers. Even our children who were in the army used it to rob us
(Mukono, man)

3.2.3 National identity cards

National identity card was suggested by a few focus group members as a potentially unifying policy since currently it was not possible to tell a Ugandan from other nationalities. References were made to graduated tax tickets and letters from LCs as documentation people used to identify a Ugandan from a foreigner in the absence of a national identity card.

Ugandans should have national identity cards. This will unite us as a nation and avoid suspicion.
(Lira, Religious Leader)

3.3 Recommendations related to Group Perceptions and Social Memory

Most of the recommendations from focus groups for national unity and reconciliation fall under the issue of changing group perceptions and social memory. Although several activities and strategies were suggested across the country, common to all these recommendations was the need for improving Ugandans' understanding of one another.

3.3.1 Sensitization for Unity and Reconciliation

Sensitization for unity and reconciliation was commonly mentioned as a response to the limited knowledge Ugandans have about other fellow Ugandans. The team believes that such sensitization can highlight attributes that unite Ugandans as opposed to those that divide them, in addition to underlining the importance of national unity and reconciliation.

Just change the culture of sensitization such that children are given better information about our country that portrays a positive picture of it.
(Kampala, Youth)

Part Three

3. Strategies for National Reconciliation

3.1 Introduction

This study was an attempt to capture the perceptions of Ugandans on issues related to national identity and unity, and to voice their views on the way forward for national unity and reconciliation. In a way, the study and this report sought to bring the discussion about national unity and reconciliation outside of meeting rooms of Kampala. Opinions and recommendations of youth, women, men and elders of all socio-economic and geographic backgrounds were recorded and subsequently analyzed.

Recommendations were varied yet all Ugandans interviewed saw reconciliation and unity as intertwined with politics, economics and laws. Hence, their recommendations reflected this larger framework for reconciliation and unity, as well as specific activities for reconciliation. This section will present the recommendations of respondents as well as of the study team under the three main findings of the study, in an effort to link the recommendations with the problems.

3.2 Recommendations related to Ugandan National Identity

3.2.1 Establishing a process of a truth and reconciliation in the country

The study revealed that Ugandans had different negative perceptions of each other. Years of turmoil that characterized the country also bred hatred among sections of the Uganda populace. Establishment of a truth and reconciliation process with the involvement of the church and traditional leaders would help bring healing and ultimate reconciliation amongst tribes in Uganda.

3.2.2 Civic education

The findings of the study highlight the necessity for building a clearer and more coherent understanding of national identity across the country in order to strengthen the feeling of unity among Ugandans. In other words, there is need for sustaining and strengthening the legal framework for civic national identity and supporting it with civic education. Given the contemporary political environment, the study team believes that it will be particularly important to make sure that civic education for political purposes does not become confused with civic education for civic nationalism and unity purposes.

***There is need for sensitization on who should settle and be allowed to become Ugandan indicating exactly what period it should take.
(Bombo, Woman)***

The focus of civic education should be directed towards the promotion of constitutionalism, and constitutional knowledge should become part and parcel of the school curriculum. Having the constitution translated into different major languages would be the first step in popularising constitutionalism.

northern Uganda, blamed southerners for the injustice. Focus groups in central Uganda blamed westerners. Focus groups in Kibaale, blamed southerners, i.e. those close to the Rwandan border. Focus groups in Bushenyi blamed the people in Mbarara. Focus groups in Mbarara blamed the Banyankole. The Banyankole in Mbarara blamed a certain clan. Overall, the perception of injustice and exclusion existed throughout the country and made every Ugandan feel less Ugandan.

that there was a strong fear for revenge and tribal conflicts following the conflict in the north and the east. This perception was common mainly in the west, east and north of the country. The fear appears to have a link with the fact that most conflicts in Uganda are perceived as tribal.

Finally, in response to a question asking to compare Uganda of today with Uganda of the past in terms of national unity, war and insecurity emerged as the sole and decisive factor in the responses of the focus group members. Focus groups in the areas experiencing ongoing conflict and insecurity said that Uganda was more united in the past whereas focus groups in the areas with no ongoing conflict said that Uganda is more united today.

Uganda in the past was more united than Uganda of today. What has destroyed her are the ongoing discriminations and the wars. The people in the north are separated from the other tribes. As you move, you have seen the difference between some parts of Uganda and here. (Gulu. Elder)

2.4.4 Fears of Conflict for the future

It was found that there were a number of fears within the communities the study covered. Among the most prominent fears was the fear for political transition. Political transition, whatever way it takes, was perceived as a future cause of conflict. Issues related to delimitation of the presidential term limit were noted as very likely to trigger conflict. For example, in Luweero, people noted that Ugandan leaders did not respect the constitution. They noted that Obote abrogated the constitution in the 1960s in his favour and it brought problems; and also noted that the current attempts to amend the constitution will bring problems.

The study also established that there were fears related to the Land Act. Some focus groups claimed that the Land Act in particular gave neither the landlords nor tenants control over the land, which they saw as a source of confusion that will most likely result into open conflict. The study also established that Ugandans identified Domestic Relations Bill (DRB) as a potential source of future conflict.

It was also established that there was a strong fear for revenge and tribal conflicts following the conflict in the north and the east. This perception was common mainly in the west and north of the country. The fear appears to have a link with the fact that most conflicts in Uganda are perceived as ethnically based.

2.4.5 Making Sense of Political Inclusion, Resource Distribution and Peace

The centrality of political inclusion, fair distribution of economic resources and peace is not a groundbreaking finding for Uganda. What is unique, however, is that each and every focus group interviewed expressed that they were politically excluded and did not receive a fair share of the economic resources. Furthermore, all of the groups interviewed perceived their political exclusion and unjust share from the economic resources to be the fault of another group. In other words, they perceived that another group was benefiting from political power and economic resources at their expense. This perception remained the same in all 14 districts, including Bushenyi, Mbarara, and Luweero, only that the group blamed for the injustice changed. The focus groups in

underdevelopment emerged as a major cause for the absence of national pride only second to insecurity and war.

***We are so tired of having Pajeros, Benzes, and Landcruisers going only to the west. When will they start moving to the north past Karuma?
(Kampala, Man)***

Service delivery and distribution of resources are directly related to economic inclusion and the feeling of Marginalisation, and hence affect national pride and feeling of unity.

2.4.3 Peace and security as the major concern to people

Peace and security emerged as possibly the most important issue with regards to national unity. Among others, peace and security (or war and insecurity) were brought up by most of the focus groups: (1) as a source of national pride or the lack of it, (2) as a major problem of Uganda today; (3) as a fear for the future; and (4) as the decisive factor for comparing national unity today with the past.

At first, the place was good but since the instability came here, I don't want to stay here. For us here, we have the instability from Karamoja and Kony. I'm not proud, I regret staying in Uganda because of different wars.

In terms of national pride, Ugandans living in non-conflict areas were more likely to be proud of their nationality than Ugandans living in conflict areas. Among those who expressed that they were proud of being a Ugandan, peace and security in the country were given as the most common cause after natural features and service delivery.

I'm not proud because of the problems I'm facing. I didn't have a proper education; I was displaced to here because of Kony. Here there's land problem, I cannot farm. I feel I should pay taxes as a Ugandan but I don't have an income to pay taxes

War and insecurity also emerged as a major problem of Uganda today. Most of the focus groups that mentioned war and insecurity as a major problem of Uganda were from the northern and eastern regions, although some of the focus groups in other parts of the country mentioned them also. The LRA conflict was identified as the most important issue related to security, followed by tribal and religious conflicts¹³. Focus groups across the country differed significantly in their explanations on the root causes of the LRA conflict but there was an overwhelming agreement for dialogue and peace talks as the only way to end the war.

In response to the question about fears for the future, conflict and insecurity were mentioned by the most number of focus groups. The most common fear was conflicts related to political transition in Uganda. The continuation of the LRA conflict and related issues such as land confiscation, famine and absence of education was the second most common fear among the Ugandans interviewed. It was also established

¹³ Among religious conflicts identified by focus group members were Catholic vs Anglican, Muslim vs Christian, and Born agains vs. others conflicts.

To them, the war is not only intended to reduce the number of the people in the north but also to make the people of the north impoverished, politically weak and isolated.

There is a plan to have the Karimojong and Kony kill all the Iteso so that they can take over our land and even MPs from this place cannot see it.
(Katakwi, Man)

They noted that there was discrimination against the northern region in the distribution of the “political cake” and that by denying the north adequate political cake, the economic development of the region was being deliberately stifled since politicians also control development.

2.4.1 Decentralization and Tribalism

Decentralisation has exacerbated tribalism- the study found that decentralisation was perceived as a factor, which reinforced tribalism. According to a number of key informants and focus group members, while decentralization was a good system of governance, the current form in which it was being implemented did not reflect a national character and therefore promoted tribalism and discrimination. The key issue behind this argument is that districts have become tribal enclaves to a large extent as they are demarcated along ethnic and sub-ethnic lines.

Decentralization has made Uganda more tribalistic and is promoting nepotism. It should be revisited and made to have a national character. Civil servants should be transferable like it used to be in the past.
(Buhemvi Local Leader)

They noted that it would be difficult to find a person from a different ethnic group holding a sensitive position in a district dominated by another ethnic group, and that a number of people especially the Chief Administrative Officers of local governments who did not belong to the dominant ethnic group in a district would either be sacked or made to resign to pave way for a person who originated from the district.

Decentralization has to be removed and the central government should be reconsidered because decentralization has led to further divisions in the country with some districts being more established than others.
(Tororo Man)

2.4.2 Service delivery and resource distribution

Closely related to tribalism, service delivery and resource distribution were identified as one of the root causes of conflicts in Uganda. Focus group members identified service delivery as a major factor for feeling proud or not proud of their nationality.¹² Delivery of services such as health, education and infrastructure emerged as a major cause for national pride only second to natural features of Uganda such as climate, land fertility and water bodies. For instance in West Nile, it was established that tarmacking of the Pakwach-Arua road was a major source of pride. Similarly, lack of services and

¹² National pride is an important indicator as it is closely linked to national belonging and nationalism.

The implication of such a system to unity and coexistence is that when people are born and brought up in one place and no attempts are made to expose them to the wider external world, they uphold what oral history teaches them about other ethnic groups, which forms the basis of their relation with people from other ethnic groups. Where negative perceptions are strong, they may end up hating, socially under-looking or excluding people belonging to other groups.

2.3.5 Media and its Influence on Perceptions

The study also established that the print and electronic media has strong effects on social memory and perceptions. Focus group members referred to radio and newspapers as their main source of information about current events and hence their perception of other groups. It was not possible to obtain analytical information from the focus group discussions and key informants about the effects of media on their perceptions.

The research team was not able to conduct an extensive literature review on the topic or a review of radio and newspaper coverage.¹¹ Considering the influence of media on people's perceptions as the interpreter of current events, the research team strongly recommends an extensive study on the effects of media on national unity and reconciliation.

2.3.6 Making Sense of Effects of Group Perceptions on National Unity

In analysing the influence of group perceptions and social memory on national unity, two major issues emerge. Firstly, the level of interaction among different tribes in Uganda is limited. Most areas of the country are ethnically homogeneous. Opportunities for interaction through schools, business and travel are few. Consequently, negative perceptions created through oral history persist without the challenge of personal experiences.

Secondly, school education and media continue to be misused for influencing perceptions in a way that weakens national unity. Hence, negative perceptions about other groups persist through time and continue to disunite the Ugandan nation.

2.4 Effects of Governance and Resource Distribution on perceptions

The study established that political inclusion, fair distribution of economic resources and peace were the most important factors in shaping people's perceptions about national conflicts and unity. According to most focus groups and key informants, tribalism was the main problem in the country and the major cause of injustices people undergo. For instance, several of the focus groups across the country perceived the current war in northern Uganda as being influenced by tribal motives.

***During the Obote government, there were some killings in Luwero so they think that there is now need for payback.
(Lira, Woman)***

¹¹ "War of Words" is one of the few publications about the role of media in shaping perceptions in Uganda, although its scope is limited to the conflict in northern Uganda.

Similarly, MK Standard Social Studies for Upper Primary, by Lubega Charles presents patterns and issues in terms of a tribal representation of historical events. Although the author lists “Bantu”, “Nilotics”, and “Cushites” as the major ethnic groups in East Africa he provides only 1 page on Nilotics and 9 lines on Cushites as opposed to the 4.5 pages on Bantu. In talking about the “results of the Bantu migration into East Africa” (69), he lists: “mixed with non-Bantu people and developed different tribes and languages, introduced iron working and use of iron tools; large-scale crop farming; and cross cultural enrichment”.

Whereas when talking about the results of the migration of “River-Lake Nilotes”, he lists: “their movements and wars caused refugees. They overthrew the rulers they found and established their own administration. In some areas, they were absorbed while in others they absorbed the local people. They broke up the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom.” In other words, the author argues that the Bantu migration brought about development and enrichment, whereas the Nilotes migration brought about wars, refugees, overthrowing of rulers and breaking up of a kingdom.

In discussing the concept of nation, the author does not list any attributes of the Ugandan nation. Instead he emphasizes the divisions and the lack of common attributes. After listing “national dress” as an attribute of a nation he adds, “Uganda has none.” In explaining the creation of the Ugandan nation, he “proudly” states “the colonialists used different methods to coerce many nations and principalities to form Uganda.” “As a result of the above methods [agreements, use of force, fuelling conflicts, promoting rivalry], the nation we called Uganda evolved.”

2.4.4. b School Admission System

The school admission system especially admission to post primary institutions was perceived not to be in the interest of the promotion of social interaction and coexistence among different ethnic groups. According to a number of key informants, school admission was promoting ethnicity more than nationalism. It was noted for instance that the school admission was not based on random selection of qualified students that would allow more social interactions among different ethnic groups; but on score and the ability to pay. What is important here is that schools were perceived to be ethnic academic centres.

To the key informants who offered this view, secondary and tertiary schools were everywhere and people tended to go to the nearest institutions since in addition to the non-random admission, schools perceived to be doing well academically tended to be more expensive and were located far away usually in the cities where the bulk of the population whose perceptions needed to be changed could not afford.

Our children no longer enjoy the benefits of social interaction we had in the past. They can even get stranded in their own country, which cannot happen to me at my age. I studied in Mbarara and Lira and I know these two peoples very well. There are bad people everywhere and there are good people everywhere. Our children only hear of bad things about other people and take them to be true. They no longer interact with other people the way we did.

However, on the whole, there appeared to be a generational transition in stereotypes, with the younger generation holding less negative perceptions against other ethnic groups as a result of relative exposure.

2.3.4 Effects of Formal Education on Social Memory

The study established that formal education has a strong effect on perceptions groups hold against other groups. The aspects of education that were identified to be promoting negative perceptions and stereotyping were school curriculum and school admission system.

2.4.4. a School Curriculum

The study found that individuals referred to their schooling as the source of information and hence their perceptions on other groups. As it was not possible to obtain analytical information from the focus group discussions and key informants about the effects of school curriculum on perceptions, the team conducted a literature review on the topic, as well as a sample study of schoolbooks.

In her article titled "Vehicles of Ethnic Identity: How Media, Education and Storytelling can Contribute to Peace building in Northern Uganda," Annan argues that the concept of ethnicity and sense of superiority/inferiority are embedded in the education system of Uganda. She makes particular reference to Nganda's (1996) thorough examination of primary textbooks used of all primary schools in Uganda whereby a significant discrepancy exists in ethnic representation through illustrations, verbal examples, use of vernacular language, among others, in the favour of groups from Central region (18).

In her informal reading of two textbooks used throughout Uganda to teach history, *East Africa Through a Thousand Years* (Were & Wilson, 1970) and *A History of East Africa* (Odhiambo, Ouso, & Williams, 1977), Annan observes that the Baganda have significantly more coverage in the textbooks than any other Ugandan tribe (19). She argues that the general style of the book portrays a sanitized history with little, if any; information offered that would provoke questions in the readers regarding the morality or justice of the historical events.

Similarly, sample informal literature review conducted by the research team demonstrates that books especially those written by single authors risk historical and political interpretation from an ethnic perspective. For instance, *A Compendious Monograph for African Nationalism (A-Level History Vol1)* by Aporo George Goldie, 1997, used for A-level students portrays the independence period as more of an accidental incident, mainly due to external factors rather than Ugandan efforts. Arguments such as "However Buganda continued to obstruct political changes which treated Buganda as an integral part of Uganda, much to annoyance of non-Buganda Ugandans," (128) and "The Baganda were very proud of themselves and opposed every attempt to integrate Buganda into Uganda and demanded for separation. They argued that integration with the rest of Uganda would deter their progress," (134) obscure the perceptions of students about historical events and encourage them to think about history and subsequently current Uganda in ethnic terms.

Although negative perceptions held against the Bakiga by the Banyoro were due to mutual fear⁹, it is likely that it has roots in the subjugation of Banyoro under the Baganda.

Oral history has taught young people about how the Banyoro lost their land to the Baganda and their suffering under the Baganda, which in turn established a strong feeling of fear that the events would be repeated if the Bakiga were politically in charge of the district.

In 1964, when we were under Buganda government I went to then Minister for Education in the Buganda government for a scholarship. When I requested to be given government scholarship, he told me, WE DO NOT GIVE SCHOLARSHIP TO PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

According to the Banyoro, the Bakiga whom they referred to as *Bafuruki* (settlers) had even given some of the places in the district Kikiga names, a stark memory of what the Baganda did when they ruled the district.

The Baganda never wanted us to register birth of our children using Kinyoro names but Kiganda names. When one refused, his child would not be registered, that is why some of us here have Kiganda names when actually we are Banyoro. The Bakiga have started behaving the same way by first changing names of places, and who knows, next time it will be names of our children.

Oral history is not always specific to one group. At times, oral histories share commonalities across different groups. For example, the study observed that there were certain ethnic groups that were negatively perceived across the country¹⁰. For instance, nearly all focus groups held the perception that the Baganda were “thieves” and cunning although none of the participants could testify that they had been conned, robbed or cheated by a Muganda.

The Karimojong were perceived by most focus groups across the country as being warmongers and cattle rustlers. Most of these groups had never interacted with the Karimojong people.

The Acholi and the Langi were perceived as aggressive, and yet those who physically interacted with them noted that they were actually hardworking, social and religious. Since the perceptions are so common yet not based on personal experience, it is very likely that oral history, media and schools have all played a part in their creation.

The Baganda, Karimojong and Acholi were all aware of others’ perceptions of them as thieves, warmongers, and aggressive respectively. They all expressed a feeling of injustice and at times, alienation due to the mismatch between their positive self-image and others’ negative image of them.

⁹ The Bakiga have acquired wealth and are seeking political power to protect it for fear of Banyoro chasing them away, while the Banyoro fear if the Bakiga were in charge, they (Banyoro) would be discriminated against.

¹⁰ Nearly all focus groups in the 14 districts had the same perception about such ethnic groups

Iteso, as there were several Iteso living among them. Even with the tensions that existed between the Langi and Acholi in Lira following the massacre in Barlonyo camp by the LRA, there was a general feeling of forgiveness by the two communities towards each other.

Similarly, in the case where groups had a conflict in the past, the more limited the level of positive interaction between groups, the stronger and the longer the feeling of revenge remains. This was confirmed by the strong negative feelings against the Acholi and Lango in Buganda, and against the Acholi in the West Nile and Teso.

The explanation for this could be found in the effect of social distance on the tendency to de-personalize members of a group and perceive them as the group itself instead of individuals. The more the interaction groups have with each other, the better they understand each other. Hence, they are able to see an individual as an individual rather than as the group. Secondly, the closer the distance between groups, the more the number of common attributes and connections between them, such as language, marriage, cultural practices. Such commonalities make de-personalization of members of a neighbouring group more difficult.

2.3.3 Oral history and Perceptions

The study established that oral history as a method for creating and preserving social memory affects group perceptions deeply. Where oral history represents hatred, superiority or the triumph of one ethnic group over the other, there were skewed perceptions of one ethnic group about the other. The study found that many young people would have strong negative feelings towards a certain group with whom they did not have any personal interactions. In justifying their descriptions of another group, they would tell stories from history or refer to their parents' statements.

Most of the people in the north are hungry and warlike. We grew up hearing that they are fierce and hostile.
(Mukono Youth)

For instance, in Luweero, people from northern Uganda were referred to as murderers, killers, and looters even among young people. The study found that in some of these places, the word Acholi was used to refer to everything bad and when a child did something bad, he/she was referred to as an Acholi.

Similarly, young Banyoro held negative feelings against the Baganda based on their group's oral history and social memory. In explaining current problems in Kibaale, young people gave surprisingly detailed accounts of events that took place in 19th century when the counties of Bugangaizi and Buyaga (today's Kibaale district) were awarded to Buganda kingdom by the British imperialists for Buganda kingdom's cooperation in defeating Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom.

Similarly, ongoing conflicts negatively affect group perceptions of other groups. The study established that the conflict in the north had created a negative perception about the people from the north. In focus groups in peaceful parts of the country, northerners were described as murderers, aggressive and hostile people – implying that the tribes affected by the conflict somehow brought it upon themselves. When asked about the explanation for their perceptions, many referred to the ongoing conflict and its coverage in the media. Even within the region itself, the conflict was narrowed down to tribalism. According to some IDPs in Lira and Katakwi, the conflict was because the Acholi were secretive and had failed to accept leadership from people from other tribes.

The Acholi don't say the truth about Kony. We feel they are hiding something otherwise he would be history by now. The warmongers have a bad motive towards this country and this is why the war has continued to Teso and here in Lira yet they can control their own children.

Limited knowledge on the conflict and narrow understanding about its causes has fuelled its negative effects on perceptions of northerners. While some people perceived the armed conflict as a deliberate attempt by the south to exact revenge on the north, others interpreted it as a tribal war as the northerners want to come back to power to kill people.

These people in government should name the amount of compensation they want from the Langi so that we may have peace. They took our cattle and now they even want our land.

Some people explained the conflict as the outcome of greed to obtain wealth by some elements of the belligerents or as a plot by the government to grab land from the northerners.

According to key informants from regions far from the conflict, information about the conflict was scanty and skewed causing most people to have a narrow understanding of the conflict as a mere tribal struggle.

In the case where groups had a conflict in the past, there was a negative correlation between distance and the level of forgiveness and a positive correlation between distance and the intensity of the feeling of revenge. In other words, the less the distance between groups, the higher the level of forgiveness and the lower the intensity of the feeling of revenge in the long term.

When the Iteso killed some Karimojong people in Katakwi, we did not revenge on the Iteso people in Karamoja even when we had the means and capacity to do so because we knew those were acts of individuals.
(Moroto. Elder)

This presents a different correlation than the one between distance and general perceptions discussed above. For example, the Karimojong were willing to forgive the

The study found that the level of interaction, contact, the physical distance between different groups, and experience of past conflict, level of social interaction; as well as oral history, formal education, and media are all factors affecting group perceptions of self and other groups.

2.3.1 Effect of Distance on Perceptions

The study established that the further away ethnic groups are from another, the less they know about each other and the less negative the perceptions they have about each other. In this case, being far refers to both the spatial gap and the extent of physical contact between groups.

In cases where groups are far from each other and there has been limited physical or historical contact between the groups, perceptions of “other” tend to be less negative and more focused on stereotypical cultural practices rather than behaviour and character. The stereotypes are mostly learned from media, family and school.

Focus group discussion in the same locations, however, revealed long lists of predominantly negative perceptions about groups neighbouring them. Personality traits (such as harsh, primitive, abusive, discriminative) and behaviour patterns (such as being dirty, over-drinking, sex-maniacs) tended to form most of the perceptions. Women focus group members, however, extensively mentioned cultural practices related to women (such as marriage ceremonies, treatment of a new bride in a family, cooking practices).

2.4.2 Effects of Experience of Conflict on Perceptions

In cases where there is a history of conflict, perceptions tend to be strongly negative and focused on behaviour and character. In Luweero, for example, there was a strong negative perception of groups from the north and east of the country despite physical distance. While people in the Mbarara, Bushenyi and Kibaale perceived people in the north and east merely as being aggressive in their way of speaking, people from Luweero perceived people from the north and east as murderers, looters and rapists. Their perception appeared to have been largely influenced by the history of conflict, which has shaped their social memory, as well as their group identity to a great extent.

“I am proud of our country, president and the fact that we sacrificed our lives to be killed by the Acholi and Lango so as to have the peace that every one is enjoying now”

The negative perceptions about northerners in Luweero were backed up with specific reference to the tensions between the then government of Uganda perceived as being “Northern” and Buganda kingdom in the 1960s, and the 1981-85 armed conflict between the then National Resistance Army (NRA) and the then government of Uganda that took place in the Luweero Triangle⁸.

⁸ Luweero triangle comprised of the then Luweero, Mubende and Mpigi districts all in central Uganda and predominantly Baganda by ethnicity

due to insecurity and those groups who were migrants in Kampala or a major trading centre.⁶ Surprisingly, religion was not mentioned by many of the focus group members and most of those who mentioned religion were Catholic, Muslims and “Born Again” Christians. Only women mentioned role in family, whereas role in society and profession was mentioned only by community leaders and business (wo) men. Finally, political affiliation was mentioned only by a handful of focus group members, and all were in the southwestern part of the country.

This can be interpreted as an indication that most Ugandans are still at a stage of transition from ethnic identification to national identification, whereby loyalties are still unclear and contextual. It could also mean a very strong ethnicity based understanding of nationhood.

2.2.5 Making Sense of the Confused State of Ugandan National Identity

In analyzing the transitional state that the Ugandan national identity is in, four main issues emerge. Firstly, civic education in the country has been inadequate to build a civic national identity or inform citizens and change their perceptions in line with national laws. There are signs of success particularly through secondary school education; however, it is still far from reaching the general population. Secondly, although exposure in the form of mobility, interaction and education is key to acceptance of others and the Constitution, the ratio of people who can be defined as having exposure remains small.

Thirdly, if most of the Ugandans continue to define national identity solely on ancestry while an increasing number of immigrants become citizens of Uganda, there is a likelihood that discrimination and exclusion against those who are not perceived to be real Ugandans will bring about new conflict and further disunity in the country.

Fourthly, if national identity continues to be defined solely on ancestry and ethnic basis, creation of a united nation in a diverse society like Uganda will remain a major challenge. Loyalties will continue to be divided between ethnic/tribal identity and national identity. Creating a united nation certainly does not have to mean ignoring or removing ethnic diversity; it could actually mean promoting a civic identity that cherishes the ethnic diversity of the nation.

2.3 The Role of Group Perceptions and Social Memory

The study established that perceptions of other groups and social memory⁷ have significant influence on unity in Uganda. To put it directly, every group has something negative to say about the other groups and something positive to say about themselves. Overall, knowledge about other groups is limited and mostly has a negative character.

⁶ An exception was Kibale, where almost all focus groups mentioned their district as a primary identity. This could be related to the centrality of the district’s history as a lost county to the identity of its residents.

⁷ Social memory can be defined as preserved collection of events in the past and perceptions that are shared by a group of people. Social memory is communicated to young members of the groups in a way that their memories are formed without personally experiencing events or forming personal perceptions. Shared images, but not necessarily the facts, of the past form the social memory and explain the present social and political to all members of the group.

A number of key informants and focus group members also referred to territory, yet mostly in order to argue that there was no commonality among Ugandans except for the fact that they were living within the same boundaries.

Only a handful of focus group members referred to civic attributes such as a common Constitution, Parliament and flag, which is unusual given the ethnic diversity of the Ugandan nation. More interestingly, no mentions were made to a common history or a common future, both of which are theoretically the building blocks of any nation.

A pattern similar to that of national identity emerged with Ugandans' perceptions on the attributes of their national identity. Most of those who referred to civic attributes were young and highly educated individuals. Most members of the focus groups referred to cultural and blood-related attributes, which in the case of the ethnically diverse Uganda meant the lack of an attribute common to all Ugandans. In other words, most Ugandans were unable to identify the attributes of a Ugandan. The fact that most of those who referred to civic attributes were young Ugandans is another indication that Ugandan national identity is in a state of transition from an ethnicity/ancestry-based identity to a civic one.

2.3.4 Primary Identity

During focus group discussions, primary identity was defined, as the most important identity in defining an individual's own self and loyalties. Collecting information on primary identity was particularly difficult because: (1) Although the study was done through group discussions, primary identity is based on an individual; (2) Primary identity is contextual by its very definition, hence the wording and contextualization of the questions posed directly affected the responses received. Consequently, the team refrains from providing any specific ranking on primary identities of Ugandans, as it may be misleading. Some general conclusions, however, emerged from the study with regards to primary identity.

In line with the conclusion that Ugandan national identity was in a state of transition, nationality and ethnicity/tribe were ranked highest in terms of primary identity, and the number of people choosing nationality as their primary identity was almost the same as the number of people choosing ethnicity/tribe as their primary identity.

Almost all the people interviewed identified with a group that they belonged to by birth (nationality, tribe, clan, family,) as opposed to a group by choice (profession, role in community, hobbies). Nationality and ethnicity/tribe were ranked highest in terms of sources of primary identity. Interestingly, the state of transition with regards to Ugandan national identity was also reflected in Ugandans' primary identities. The number of people choosing nationality as their primary identity was almost the same as the number of people choosing ethnicity/tribe as their primary identity. In other words, tribe, ethnicity, region or religion did not affect the strength of national identity and loyalty.

The level of importance attached to other identities, however, differed based on the gender, religion, tribe and location of the focus group. Clan, for example, was given significant importance as an identity among the Langi, Baganda and Iteso. Place of origin; for example, was given significant importance only by those groups displaced

Ugandans held the perception that Ugandans of Indian and Somali origins had failed to properly socially/culturally integrate with them. Because the two groups were perceived not to accept social and cultural practices of the host communities, they (host communities) reportedly tolerated them (Indians and Somalis) who become Ugandan citizens through naturalization because the constitution said so.

The challenge to integration especially of immigrants is also related to the nature of the Constitution about Ugandan nationality. While the 1995 Constitution gives opportunity to immigrants to acquire citizenship by naturalisation, it goes ahead to list the different ethnic groups that form the Ugandan nation. It becomes difficult therefore to find a place for immigrants among the listed ethnic groups and at the same time strengthens the view that national identity must be based on the ethnic groups.

Another challenge to integration comes from the international community and national government policy towards refugees. Not until recently did integration of refugees with host communities become a policy issue. Refugee policy was about isolating and confining refugees away from the nationals. Even now that the policy has been eased, it is still restrictive because physical support/assistance can only be extended to refugees living in settlements. While the policy does not encourage integration, the services provided to refugees in settlements become a source of discontent by the Ugandans. For instance, focus groups in West Nile, Masindi and Gulu noted that government cared more for the refugees than it cared for its own nationals. They alluded to the fact that while people in internally displaced peoples (IDP) camps were insecure, starving and dying from curable diseases, refugees were well catered for.

2.2.3 Attributes of National Identity

Another indication for the transitional state of Ugandan national identity was the responses of Ugandans about different attributes of a Ugandan.⁵ When asked about the attributes that define a Ugandan and set Ugandans apart from other nationalities, most of the focus group members referred to cultural practices, physical appearance, and language, all of which usually accompany an ethnic understanding of identity. However when probed about cultural practices, physical characteristics or a language that is common to all Ugandans; focus group members could not give a response or gave responses that were challenged by other members of the group.

We found ourselves within these borders with those other people. We happened to fall within that demarcation. We may be connected to those people only through marriage. Otherwise, there are no other channels that

We speak different languages, have different colours. It is difficult to find something that is common to all Ugandans. (Mbarara, Youngman)

⁵ The attributes of Ugandan national identity were explored only with one-third of the focus groups, so the arguments in this sub-section are not conclusive.

Besides formal education, mobility and level of interaction with other groups played a significant role in shaping perceptions on national identity. The study established that people who lived in the periphery of the country (border districts) and those from non-peripheral areas differed in their perception of national identity. Whereas people in peripheral areas perceived citizenship by ancestry and citizenship by naturalisation as equally important, most of those who lived in non-peripheral areas were less likely to accept identity by other means other than ancestry. Also, while people in peripheral areas accepted children of immigrants born in Uganda as Ugandans, people in non-peripheral areas accepted only grandchildren or great-grandchildren of immigrants born in Uganda as Ugandans. The difference could be explained by the level of mobility of individuals, which tend to be higher in border areas, as well as the number of residents who are not born in Uganda. This may also be linked to the fact that many Ugandans living in border areas share ethnic identity with people from neighbouring countries, thus are likely to see people speaking their language and sharing their culture as fellows rather than foreigners, even though they hold a different formal nationality.

Similarly, many of the Ugandans living in Kampala accepted Ugandans by naturalisation as "Ugandans". The diversity of the population and the level of interaction with other groups in Kampala are all factors that may have affected this perception – as well as the fact that city dwellers have less connection with land, which often seems to be linked to local definitions of "outsiders" or "foreigners".

2.2.2 Integration and Perceptions on Ugandans by Naturalization

In addition to level of exposure, the study also established that perception of Ugandans on citizenship by naturalisation was significantly affected by the immigrant's level of integration into the society. The study found that those who willingly integrated culturally and socially with the host communities were more likely to be accepted into the host community and as Ugandans. Immigrant populations who tended to stick to their own social groups, however, were likely to be identified with their place of origin.

Somalis who came young and married fellow Somalis although participate in politics and are councillors cannot be considered nationals. However Turkana who came long ago and have invited their relatives to settle here

The case of Karimojong was particularly interesting in understanding the importance of integration into the host community for being accepted as a Ugandan. In the Karimojong context, acceptance to go through certain rituals and willingness to intermarry were the main indicators of integration.

In other words, to be perceived as a national among the Karimojong people, one had to be married to a Karimojong, undergo an initiation such as slaughter of a bull, and adopt a Karimojong name and clan. This seems to show that the Karimojong consider "Ugandan-ness" in very local terms.

Although the Karimojong case is unique as it tends towards having one totally absorbed in the Karimojong social and cultural practices to the extent that one is more or less required to abandon his/her one cultural and social practices, across the country

If people forgot about the ancestry, then it will take four or five generations [for someone to become a Ugandan]. But if you are an outstanding person such as an opinion leader, [your origin] will be more difficult to be forgotten by the people. (Luweero, Local Leader)

A second finding of the study is that the strongest correlation existed between level of acceptance of registered immigrants as Ugandans and an individual's level of exposure to other Ugandans and civic values. Ugandans who agreed with the Constitution and expressed full acceptance of registered individuals as Ugandans were for the most part well-educated, had extensive travel experiences, had interacted with individuals from various different groups or were leaders in their communities. Like most of the key informants, the members of the focus groups who defined Ugandans by birth and by naturalisation were those with higher levels of exposure. They referred more often to certain provisions of the Constitution.

Once you are registered, you become a citizen and a Ugandan. (Luwero, Young man)

When a person is registered legally, then that brother or sister is a Ugandan. And even where there are meetings at the local level, that person is invited to take part in the decision-making

Interestingly, even for some of those who expressed acceptance of registered immigrants as Ugandans, ancestry still emerged as a strong factor. For example, when given a scenario whereby a Ugandan by naturalisation and a Ugandan by ancestry both produced a child in a foreign country, even some of those who strongly agreed with the Constitution's definition of a citizen, hesitated to call the child of a Ugandan by naturalization a Ugandan, while mostly declaring the child of a Ugandan by ancestry a Ugandan. This seemingly contradictory statement may be due to the fact that belief in the Constitution and civic values is still in formative stages for some Ugandans and hence, lack depth and strength.

Culture can contradict with education. Culture says that the child of an Indian man born in Uganda is an Indian. What I think, this [culture] will cause bad things, which is not good. So we should value education more. (Katakwi, Young Man)

Youth across the country emerged as an interesting group in demonstrating the power of formal education in shaping individuals' perceptions of national identity. Most of the young literate people were strong supporters of the Constitution and accepted Ugandans by naturalisation as "real" Ugandans. When given different scenarios about defining a Ugandan, however, most of the youth gave conflicting responses. This could be interpreted to demonstrate the ongoing conflict between the ancestry-based national identity taught by their families and the constitution-based national identity taught in their schools.

***A real Ugandan is that person who is born in Uganda and whose parents are qualified as Ugandans and who is of one tribe among the tribes of Uganda.
(Bushenvi, Elderly man)***

This perception held true across all tribes, regions and religions. Unlike most cases of ethnic national identity in the world where the national identity becomes associated with a single ethnic group, Ugandans defined their national identity to reflect the ethnic diversity of the country.

Furthermore, all Ugandans interviewed expressed a strong conviction that national identity was determined by the father of a child, and hence disagreed with the value of gender equality characterizing the citizenship clauses in the Constitution. Even those who were adamant about women's rights or the rule of law still defended patrilineal cultural values. Out of all the focus group discussions and key information interviews, nobody considered the child of a Ugandan woman married to a non-Ugandan man, a Ugandan.

***"The children belong to the Kenyan father. Even if I give birth to them, they belong to the tribe of the father in Kenya."
(Young woman in Masindi responding to a scenario whereby a Ugandan woman marries a Kenyan man)***

There was, however, a group of Ugandans who expressed agreement with the Constitution in terms of citizenship by naturalisation and accepted registered immigrants from India, Congo, Rwanda, among others as Ugandans. Most Ugandans who accepted registered immigrants as Ugandans had higher levels of exposure to different groups of people through formal education, travelling, interaction with other groups, and having leadership roles in their communities. Particularly, young literate Ugandans were more likely to express agreement with the Constitution. Hence, national identity in Uganda appears to be in a state of transition from being based on ancestry (ethnic nationalism) to being based on the Constitution (civic and ethnic nationalism).

Ugandans who expressed a firm belief in national identity based on ancestry had several different explanations for the discrepancy between the legal definition and their personal definition of nationality. Differentiations between a Ugandan and a citizen, or a real Ugandan and a not-real Ugandan were among their explanations.

***You can be a citizen but not a Ugandan. A Ugandan must be born here; a citizen can come from other places and register to become a citizen.
(I uwero, Young Man)***

Even Ugandans who agreed only with an ancestry-based national identity in the focus group discussions, when further probed through hypothetical scenarios accepted that grandchildren of an immigrant were Ugandan as long as they accepted and adapted to the local culture. The only exceptions were in border districts and among highly nationalistic respondents. In border areas, children of immigrants were accepted as Ugandans, whereas, among highly nationalistic respondents, it would take several generations before someone could be accepted as a Ugandan.

Those who are born here can be called Ugandans. Those [of us] who are here [now] also originated from somewhere else. (Arua, Woman)

Part Two

2 Findings, Discussion and Analysis

2.1 Introduction

This section presents an analysis of the findings of the study conducted in 14 districts in Uganda within a period of 21 days. Given geographic and time limitations, the study has no claim to be scientific or to provide quantitative information. It is a study to provide preliminary information on the perceptions of Ugandans on issues that are central to unity, reconciliation and peace in the country. The team hopes that the report succeeds in inviting interest on these issues and serving as the groundwork for more comprehensive studies on related topics.

Three main conclusions were reached based on the analysis of the findings:

1. National identity is in a state of transition in Uganda;
2. Group perceptions and social memory contribute significantly to disunity in Uganda;
3. Political inclusion, fair distribution of economic resources and security are perceived as the most important factors for resolving conflicts, and promoting unity and reconciliation in the country

2.2 Ugandan National Identity: A State of Transition

The first finding of the study is that Ugandan national identity is in a state of transition with the introduction of liberal citizenship laws in the 1995 Constitution. National identity in Uganda appears to be in a state of transition from being based solely on ancestry (ethnic nationalism) to being based on the Constitution (both civic and ethnic nationalism). The new Constitution defines two different types of citizenship: citizenship by birth³ and citizenship by naturalisation.

Citizenship by naturalisation allows every person: (1) who is born in Uganda, (2) lived in Uganda since 1975, (3) married to a Ugandan or (4) migrated to and lived in Uganda at least ten years, to apply and be entitled to be registered as a citizen of Uganda, which represents a significant move from the 1967 Constitution.

Almost all Ugandans interviewed demonstrated some degree of knowledge about the 1995 Constitution with regards to citizenship⁴, but most Ugandans still firmly believe that *ancestry* is the defining factor for being a Ugandan. Hence, most Ugandans interviewed argued that one had to be of Ugandan ancestry to be a Ugandan.

If somebody comes and asks: "are you a Ugandan?" I will say: "Yes, I'm born here in Uganda; here is my grandfather's grave and here is my grandmother's grave. (Katakwi, Elderly woman)

³ Chapter 3, Article 10 of 1995 Constitution defines citizenship by birth as:

- (a) Every person born in Uganda one of whose parents or grandparents is or was a member of any of the indigenous communities existing and residing within the borders of Uganda as at the first day of February 1926 and set out in the Third Schedule to this Constitutional and
- (b) Every person born in or outside Uganda one of whose parents or grandparents was at the time of birth of that person a citizen of Uganda by birth.

⁴ Most of the focus group members knew the essence of the citizenship law yet were unsure about its details.

The team takes note that information collected through focus group discussions and key informant interviews were analyzed as objectively as possible and tremendous effort was put in to avoid drawing conclusions that were not properly supported. Nevertheless, any conclusion made in this report is still based on the team's interpretation, with the full awareness that all interpretation is influenced by perceptions. Similarly, being a qualitative study on perceptions, the interpretation of findings of the study is subject to perceptions of the reader. The team hopes that the reader interprets the findings of the study in order to promote unity and reconciliation, as opposed to division and hatred.

1.3.3 Sample Selection

A total of 52 focus groups and 40 key informants from 14 districts were selected. The table below presents the different study areas and factors considered by the team in choosing them. The map above shows the districts where the study was conducted and the factors considered for selection as indicated in the table below.

Areas of study	Factor considered for selection
Gulu	Active Armed Conflict
Katakwi,	Active Armed Conflict
Mbarara	Ethnic concentration
Kampala district	Capital city
Bushenyi	High GDP / "Island of peace"
Kapchorwa	Cattle rusting and peripheral
Moroto	Cattle rustling
Luweero	Previously affected by armed conflict
Arua	Previously affected by armed conflict
Lira	Active Armed Conflict
Masindi	Hosting Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)
Kibaale	Non-armed conflict
Tororo	Multi ethnicity and peripheral
Mukono	High GDP / "Island of peace"

1.3.4 Field work

Prior to fieldwork, a letter was written to the Directorate of Internal Security Organisation (ISO) and to all the Resident District Commissioners (RDC) announcing the study as well as introducing the research team to the respective districts. In every district, protocol visits were made to the offices of the Chief Administrative Officers (CAO), Chairpersons of the District Local Councils, and RDCs and in some cases the offices of the District Internal security Organisation (DISO) from whom clearance to undertake the study was granted.

Focus groups and key informants were mobilised through Jamii Ya Kupatanisha's (JYAK)¹ partners in the respective districts. Except for Bushenyi and Mbarara districts² where two focus groups were conducted, four focus groups were held in every district with separate focus groups for the women, youth, men, elders and community leaders.

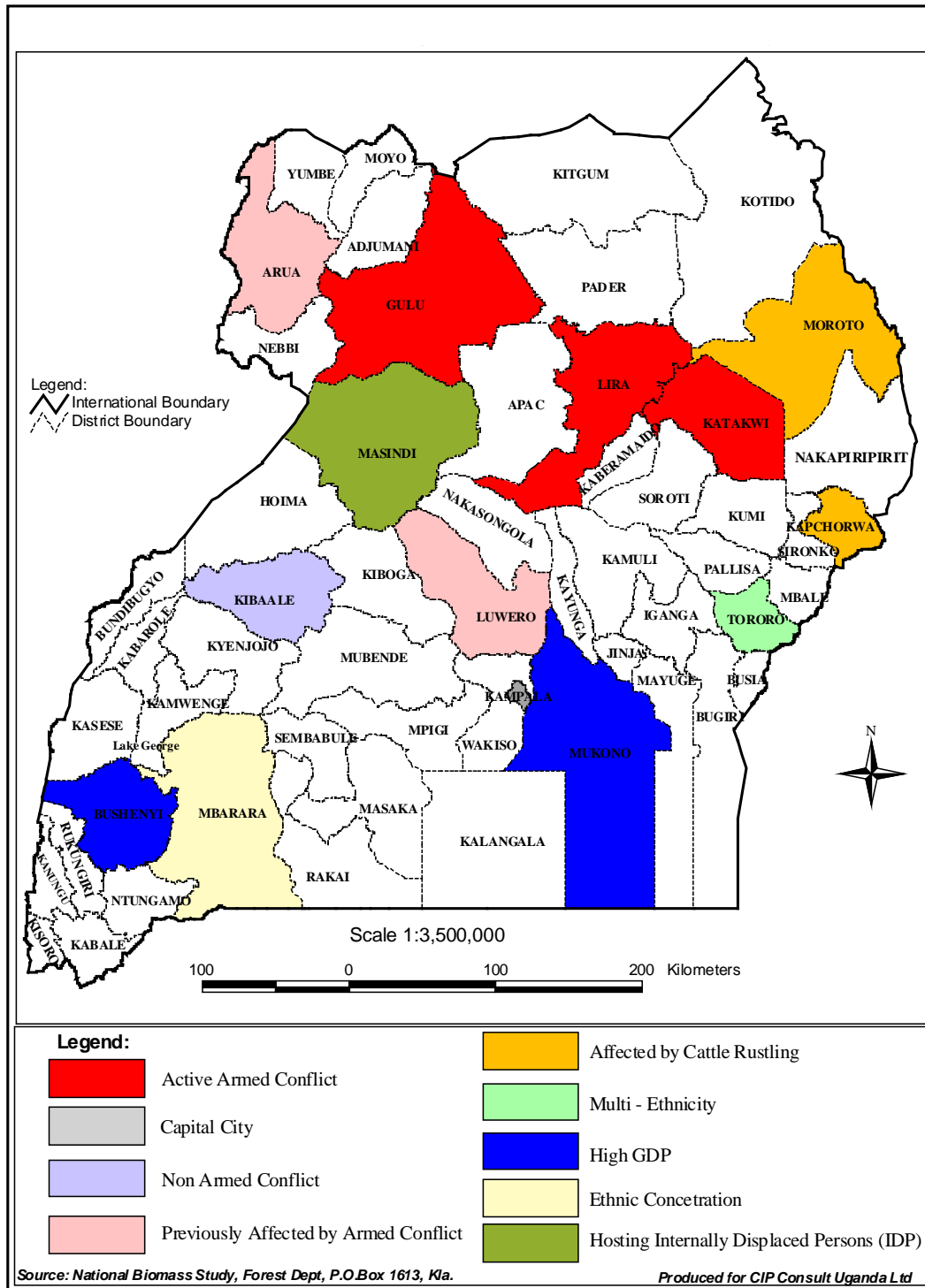
1.3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

Being a qualitative research, data generated from the focus group discussions, key informants and documentary review was subjected to a content analysis process based on the emerging issues of the study. In the first place raw data was organised to reflect different perceptions expressed by the focus groups and key informants. A summary of the different perceptions was made under the different themes from which the final write up of the report was done

¹ JYAK is a member of CSOPNU and overall coordinator of the study

² Mbarara and Bushenyi districts are predominantly inhabited by Banyankole people

Sampling Criteria for the study



Part One

1 Understanding Perceptions on National Identity

1.1 Overall Context of the Study

This study was conducted as part of ongoing civil society efforts for national reconciliation in Uganda. The team believes that reconciliation is a process for creating unity and co-existence from division rather than a one-time event such as a ceremony or a commission. It is about changing structures and perceptions that have brought about wars and divisions. To change something, there is first the need to understand the current structures and perceptions. This study was therefore an attempt to understand Ugandans' perceptions and their implications on unity and reconciliation. The team believes that a complementary and deeper study of the effects of political, economic and social structures on unity and reconciliation is necessary to establish a more complete picture of where we stand and a better understanding of the direction of where we shall move.

1.2 Framework for the study

The framework for the study was two-fold: (1) to understand Ugandans' perceptions of other fellow Ugandans; and (2) to understand Ugandans' perceptions of conflict, reconciliation and unity. As part of the first component, issues of national identity, primary identity, national pride and perceptions of self/other were investigated. Under the second component, perceptions on major conflicts, causes of these conflicts, fears for the future and recommendations for peace, reconciliation and unity were explored.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Research Design

The study relied on a conventional application of qualitative research design involving focus group discussions, key informants and documentary analysis. The triangulation of the methods helped in enhancing the internal validity and reliability of the study findings.

1.3.2 The Research Team

The research team comprised of one principal researcher and two other researchers. The principal researcher and one other researcher are Ugandans from different parts of the country and the second researcher is Turkish. The composition of the research team was done in such a way that it minimized bias. Research assistants drawn from the local communities were used to translate the questions and responses where the researchers did not have knowledge of the local dialect

The study reveals that peoples' perception of national identity varies and is largely shaped by their circumstances. Group perceptions and social memory contribute significantly to disunity in Uganda; and that political inclusion, fair distribution economic resources and security are perceived as the most important factors for resolving conflicts and promoting unity and reconciliation.

Executive summary

Summary

As part of the ongoing civil society all for National reconciliation in Uganda, CSOPNU commissioned a study on “perception on national identity”. The study was conducted in 14 districts of Uganda (Mukono, Luweero, Masindi, Arua, Gulu, Lira, Katakwi, Moroto, Tororo, Kapchorwa, Kibaale, Bushenyi, Mbarara and Kampala). The districts were purposively selected to reflect the cultural diversities and historic perspectives that shape peoples perceptions. The framework for the study was two-fold; to understand Ugandans’ perceptions about fellow Ugandans; and to understand Ugandans’ perceptions of conflict, reconciliation and unity. The study relied on a conventional application of qualitative research design involving focus group discussions, key informants interviews and documentary analysis. The triangulation of the methods helped in enhancing the internal validity and reliability of the study findings.

The study revealed that most Ugandans base their identity on ancestry even though the constitution of Uganda adequately provides for citizenship by naturalization. It further revealed that those from the border areas and people with high levels of education and/or those who interacted with other groups accepted naturalized citizenship. Exposure plays a big role in shaping perceptions of many Ugandans: people, who travelled, were educated, lived in towns and therefore had exposure to different environments, ideas, were more likely to see other ethnic groups positively, and to see them as Ugandans as compared to others.


Nationality and ethnicity were ranked highest as sources of primary identity and sense of loyalty. The number of people choosing nationality as their primary identity was almost the same as the number of people choosing ethnicity/tribes as their primary identity. The study also found that the degree of national pride was very much influenced by peace, investment and provision of services by government. Residents of areas with limited services or government provisions and those in conflict-affected areas felt marginalized and therefore had less allegiance to identity by nationality. Uganda is plagued with a lot of ethnic stereotypes; every ethnic group had something negative to say about the others. Social distance (spatial and interaction) was found to influence perceptions significantly. People were more likely to hold negative perceptions of Ugandans of neighboring ethnic groups than those at greater distance, or with whom they seldom interacted. Social memory was a point of reference for most of the continuous tension between different ethnic groups and such memories were often the outcome of written and oral history as well as media reporting.

The education system and decentralized local governance were perceived to be reinforcing a sense of ethnic/regional identity at the expense of Ugandan national identity. According to several Ugandans interviewed, decentralization did not have a national outlook as district demarcations were based on ethnicity. Education admission policy was perceived to have created ‘*ethnic academic centers*’.

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“People’s perceptions are their version of the TRUTH, and thus matter to them. Part of reconciliation in some cultures is about having an opportunity to have your version of the truth heard and respected by others, even if they have a different version themselves. If this is true, then the reconciliation process should include a process for this to happen”

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FOREWORD

For many, identity is not a big issue. On the other hand there have even been wars fought on the issue of identity. Some of the conflicts in Uganda have also been either attached to or linked to the issue of identity. These range from ethnic to religious to national identity. Identity is crucial in that it helps shape how people contextualize their actions and acts as restraints and stimulants in human behaviour.

The way Ugandans perceive each other is either recipe for conflict and confusion or peaceful coexistence. This was the motivation behind this study. Uganda comprises more than fifty ethnics groups. There are many ethnic stereotypes across the country, most of which are very negative ones. As a result, in the general meeting of the members in 2003, the member organizations felt that the conflict in Northern Uganda is only a symptom of deeply embedded problems in the society. It was felt that Uganda as a country is greatly fragmented, not only from the colonial era, but dates even far before nationhood. It is on this premise that CSOPNU commissioned this study on national identity. While the general meeting had proposed national reconciliation, in subsequent meetings it was decided that it is too broad and that there is need to focus on how Ugandans perceive themselves and others.

The need for national reconciliation is highlighted in this report as a crucial way forward for strengthening of nationhood and peace coexistence. We need to celebrate the ethnic, cultural and natural diversity of Uganda without necessarily feeling more deserving than others. This is a key to peaceful future.

The coalition of Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) is a loose advocacy coalition of approximately 40 member organizations, local and international Civil Society Organizations. CSOPNU was founded in May 2002, out of the frustration of CSOs working in Northern Uganda realizing limited impact for their interventions as a result of the worsening security situation resulting from LRA conflicts. The purpose of CSOPNU is to advocate for a just and lasting peace in Northern Uganda, based on analysis and articulation of underlying causes and effects of the conflict. Northern Uganda means the political north that includes the North-eastern districts of Teso into which the LRA have made incursions. CSOPNU's role is to conduct and support focused advocacy at national and international levels through research, analysis, discussion and policy advice.

We sincerely hope that this report will help all Ugandans see that there is need for deliberate moves toward national reconciliation, with a view to consolidating the gains in this country and stemming any issues that stop us from celebrating our diversity. In this matter, we should all join hands in doing all we can in our various capacities, to bring just and lasting peace in Northern Uganda.

.....
Stella Ayo-Odongo,
Chairperson CSOPNU Steering Committee

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CSOPNU	Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda
DISO	District Internal Security Organisation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ISO	Internal Security Organisation
JYAK	Jamii ya Kupatanisha
LRA	Lords Resistance Army
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Resistance Army
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
UN	United Nations
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army

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