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# PEACEBUILDING THROUGH EDUCATION IN POSTCONFLICT NORTHERN UGANDA:

## The Importance of Placing War-Affected Youth in Community-Oriented Schools

**Nikolaos Biziouras and Nicholas Birger**

*ABSTRACT: We investigate the role of education in the reintegration of war-affected youth in Uganda by combining participant-observation data with a micro-level survey of different educational settings. By examining the effects of different educational settings upon the reintegration of war-affected youth in contemporary Uganda, we show that the greater the level of discipline, if embedded within a community-oriented structure, the greater the chance for effective reintegration of war-affected youth within their social settings. Additionally, the more targeted the use of financial resources, as long as they go beyond a basic threshold, the greater the chance for education to work as an engine for the reintegration of war-affected youth.*

*KEYWORDS: LRA, education, reintegration, youth, community*

## I. INTRODUCTION: POSTCONFLICT EDUCATION OF WAR-AFFECTED YOUTH IN UGANDA

Until recently in northern Uganda, few youth under the age of twenty could recall a time without conflict. Most were forced to leave their homes and live in internally displaced persons' camps; some were abducted; and others were conscripted into the Lord's Resistance Army as child soldiers. Nearly all were affected by the war, directly or indirectly. These experiences make it difficult to return to a classroom, especially for those directly affected by the war such as child soldiers. Yet, this return to a classroom has become an article of faith for those involved in the reintegration of war-affected youth even in the absence of concrete evidence.

We seek to close this gap in the literature by combining participant-observation data with a micro-level survey of different educational settings. By examining the effects of different educational settings upon the reintegration of war-affected youth in contemporary Uganda, we show that the greater the level of discipline, if embedded within a community-oriented structure, the greater the chance for effective reintegration of war-affected youth within their social settings. Additionally, the more targeted the use of financial resources, as long as they go beyond a basic threshold, the greater the chance for education to work as an engine for the reintegration of war-affected youth. Indeed, both findings challenge conventional wisdom, which has argued for increased funding for education without focusing on the role and the type of discipline within the school setting, and for the need to selectively spend additional financial resources.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL IMPORTANCE, AND POLICY RELEVANCE

Analytically, we focus on education because of the critical importance that existing findings have provided us about the role of education in the reintegration of war-affected youth (Betancourt et al. 2008). We build on work that has stressed the critical difference that educational attainment plays in the lifelong earnings of war-affected youth: these youths have lost a significant amount of time without being in an educational setting where they can develop their human capital and increase their earnings (Blattman and Annan 2008). Similarly, by emphasizing the increase in social status and the increased bonds

to existing social norms about appropriate behavior, our findings add to the burgeoning literature on the positive effects that education has on the ability of war-affected youth to effectively achieve increased and permanent levels of social integration (Anderson 2009; Bronfenbrenner 1979; Ovuga and Oyok 2008; Wessells 2005). More specifically, we delve into the micro-foundations of education and social reintegration by showing how differences in the level and type of discipline within various school settings can impact the reintegration of war-affected youth, even when adjusting for different levels of financial resources. Finally, increased research on education can illuminate the complex role that community involvement has on the success of reintegration for war-affected youth by allowing us to effectively isolate key causal variables that are often difficult to locate (Angucia, Zeelen, and de Jong 2010; Betancourt et al. 2009; Cheney 2005; Oleke et al. 2007).

In this paper we focus on the case of contemporary northern Uganda because of the conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government's Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) and its impact upon young Ugandans (Behrend 1991; Pham et al. 2007). The intensity of the conflict has led to a significant youth population who have been indelibly marked by wartime activities (Castelli et al. 2005; CRS 2002; Li 2005; Ovuga, Boardman, and Wasserman 2005). Additionally, the duration of the conflict, 1986-2006, has complicated attempts to engineer successful large-scale reintegration of war-affected children and adolescents (Corbin 2008; Loughry and MacMullin 2002; Veale and Stavrou 2003, 2007). Lastly, the continued presence of various nongovernmental (NGO) and civil society (CSO) organizations as well as the aid resources allocated to Uganda because of the conflict can provide us with enough data to examine the efficacy of different reintegration tactics (Allen and Schomerus 2006). By exploring the "black box" of NGO reintegration work, we illustrate how school selection on behalf of these organizations can lead to significant differences in destructive behavior and psychosocial healing.

Policy-wise, the case of northern Uganda captures vividly the role of children and adolescents, both during the conflict and after it. (Betancourt 2008; Betancourt et al. 2008; Boothby et al. 2006; MacMullin and Loughry 2004; Machel 1996; UN 2009; UNICEF 2007). Globally, children are increasingly participating in intrastate conflict, especially in weak or failed states, and their participation, given the average duration of these conflicts, continues throughout their adolescent years (Goodwin-Gill et al. 1994; CSUCS 2004; Honwana 2006; Hum-

phreys and Weinstein 2006; Shepler 2005). Consequently, an analysis of the educational solutions implemented in northern Uganda as a way to adequately reintegrate war-affected youth can provide us with significant lessons about how to effectively achieve rehabilitation in other cases (Betancourt et al. 2004; 2005; Kohrt 2007; Verhey 2001, 2003; Williamson 2006). Moreover, given the intensity and scope of the traumatic experiences in Uganda, the micro-level analysis of our research study can be particularly helpful in similar cases where children and adolescents experience extreme trauma and widespread abuse and violence (Dyregrov et al. 2000; Dygerov et al. 2002; Gupta and Zimmer 2008; Kinzie et al. 2006; Zach-Williams 2006).

### III. FINDINGS

In this study, we used a mixed method approach, utilizing fieldwork data from a participant observation study conducted alongside a local Ugandan NGO working with war-affected children and adolescents. Through primary data collection methods such as semistructured and open-ended interviews, we illustrate how different educational settings, with some being more community-centered and/or more oriented towards nonviolence, critically affect war-affected students' ability to fully reconnect with their society. It is important to note that this is a methodologically novel approach because it allows us to focus on causal processes that are often lost in large-scale survey analysis of education and the reintegration of war-affected youth. Moreover, we examined different theories of peacebuilding through education to demonstrate the critical difference that the use of accountability-enhancing forms of discipline has on the learning-environment educational achievements of the student. Specifically, when examining elite private schools, we found higher levels of academic achievement among students, but an increased level of social marginalization and identity clashes on the basis of socioeconomic status. In contrast to conventional perceptions, we show that while some less disciplined public schools tend to lag in terms of educational achievement, they do tend to perform much better in creating a shared community among war-affected students. Likewise, we present evidence that the best-performing schools were the ones that had embedded learning within a community-driven sense of belonging and public involvement. Often this type of education requires students to combine their formal schooling with alternative forms of learning,

such as developing and managing their own farms. Not only did these schools increase the students' engagement in their community, but they also strengthened their commitment to nonviolence. Therefore, once NGO spending for education has crossed a certain threshold of approximately \$300 per student per year, it is far more important to target certain types of schools and selectively allocate resources to them in order to maximize education-based reintegration initiatives. In essence, while it is important to allocate adequate spending to education, which remains underfunded, it is even more important to target that spending once the minimum level has been reached, in order to ensure sufficient reintegration support for war-affected youth attending school.

#### IV. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Our study focuses on the northern part of Uganda that was affected by the conflict between the LRA and UPDF (Finnstrom 2003; Human Rights Watch 1997, 2003a, 2003b, 2005). Commencing in 1986 and continuing until recently, albeit at a much lower level of intensity and impact in the last years, the LRA, led by rebel leader Joseph Kony, engaged in mass abductions of approximately 30,000 children who were either killed or became critical parts of the LRA's combat forces (Behrend 1998; 1999; Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). Whether driven by the demographic factors of the time period which had created an above average level of young children or whether driven by the impressionability of young children- or by the ease with which they could be forcibly abducted, Kony's LRA became a veritable menace throughout the area, impacting, directly or indirectly through the government's "protected villages" policy, nearly 90 percent of the population (Allen 2005; Allen and Schomerus 2006; Derluyn et al. 2004; Survey for War Affected Youth 2007; Bevan 2007). Confronted with significant amounts of physical and sexual violence, throughout their tenure with the LRA, these youths experienced very high levels of torture which led to physical and emotional stress accumulating in high and wide-spread levels of traumatization (Akello et al. 2006; Amoné-P'olak 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007; Annan et al. 2006, 2008; McKay and Mazurana 2004; McKay and Wessells 2004). While conscripted youth bore the direct consequences of the wartime activities, such as physical and psychological traumas, the youth who were raised in the internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps experienced the near-constant threat of abduc-

tion and violence which traumatizing as well (Anderson 2009). In addition to the child soldiers, other participants in the conflict suffered similar forms of social marginalization. For example, upon re-entry to their communities, sexually violated ex-child wives are frequently shunned by their communities (McKay et al. 2006) and ex-child soldiers experienced levels of social stigmatization similar to that of rebel soldiers (Corbin 2008). Thus, it has become the case that the vast majority of youth in northern Uganda can be classified as “war-affected.”

While there is an increasing level of disagreement about the permanence and extent to which psychological trauma affected these youth (Betancourt et al. 2008; Blattman and Annan 2008; Women’s Commission 2001, 2005; Williamson 2006), there is near unanimous agreement that they have experienced symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder due to prolonged war (Amone-P’olak 2006, 2007; Annan et al. 2009; World Vision 2004). There is also agreement, within both policy and academic communities, about the need to utilize education as a way to accelerate and improve the reintegration of war-affected youth irrespective of their communities through a place-based recovery that accounts for trauma experienced (Anderson 2009). Indeed, while the first-generation NGOs and CSOs, meaning the NGOs and the CSOs which were the first ones in area and which established a variety of reception centers for the fulfillment of the immediate needs of returnees and those living in IDP camps (Allen and Schomerus 2006), most second-generation NGOs and CSOs have increasingly specialized in the funding of primary and secondary education.

## Research Context

Many NGOs and charities that engage in sponsoring the educational costs of war-affected youth face a common problem: where best to place students and allocate limited resources. This study was tailored for one particular NGO, The Child Is Innocent, which sponsors war-affected northern Ugandan youth in primary and secondary boarding schools by paying their fees for uniforms, school supplies, and other clothes, thus eliminating a financial burden that would further stigmatize them (Corbin 2008; Oleke et al. 2007). Through The Child Is Innocent, we conducted a school survey to identify how to best utilize limited financial resources in order to increase the probability of effective reintegration for youth. An essential part of this research was iden-

tifying those boarding schools that provided the best educational experiences to the beneficiaries of the program. Thus, to refine our research we sought to determine what type of school maximized the chances for war-affected youth to stay in school and to do so in a way that would be relevant and accommodating of their respective communities. What we found is that discipline, and by discipline we mean community-oriented discipline structured around social norms, is a critical element of the educational atmosphere, in that it provides a sharp contrast with life in IDP camps or as a member of the LRA.

## **Research Methods**

The participant-observation part of this study was conducted in July and August 2010 in the northern Ugandan town of Gulu, the capital city Kampala, and their immediate geographic surrounding areas. Our qualitative claims about the effectiveness of the different schools are construed from our observations of disparities that exist in terms of level and type of discipline across primary and secondary schools. In terms of qualitative data, we use information from semistructured and open-ended interviews with school administrators and the war-affected youth attending their schools to gauge the effectiveness of the different school settings. Observations about the quality of school infrastructure (science labs, classrooms, and dormitories) as well as the behavior of students are also incorporated into these qualitative assessments. We generate quantitative metrics, which include grade reports from 2007 through 2010 for The Child Is Innocent beneficiaries, teacher-to-student ratios, tuition per student, and university acceptance rates. The combination of all these measurements generates the following categorizations of schools, which we present in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

## **Research Findings**

In total, we surveyed 22 boarding schools during the month-long study (see tables). Boarding schools in Uganda can take a variety of forms. They can be private or public, Christian or secular, single-sex or coed, exclusively boarding or day and boarding schools. Schools in this study could be located either near the youth's home—in the Gulu District of Uganda—or far from home—Kampala or its surrounding areas.

**TABLE 1**  
**Discipline Level and School Identification**

Discipline Level	Undisciplined	Strict/Fearing Discipline	Community-Oriented Structured Discipline
Effect for Students	Always Bad	Variety of results, but good or mediocre. Often expensive	Always good. Often more affordable
Secondary School Names	-Gulu Central H.S. -Bishop Angelo Negri College -Gulu H.S.	-Pope John Paul II College -Pope Paul VI S.S. (Anaka) <b>-St. Joseph's College (Layibi)</b> -Uganda Martyrs S.S. (Namugongo) -Seroma Christian H.S. -St. Mary's College (Kisubi) St. Mary's S.S. (Kitende)	-Sacred Heart S.S. -Graceland Girls College <b>-St. Mary's College (Aboke).</b>
Primary School Names	<b>-Mary Immaculate</b> P.S. -Gulu P.S.	-Bishop Angelo Negri P.S. -Namugongo Girls P.S. -St. Tereza Namiryango Girls P.S. -Namilyango Junior Boys School -St. Savio Junior Boys School	-Bright Valley Primary

We found, unsurprisingly, that most of the schools were suffering from similar, yet common problems: overcrowding, poor facility quality, and underpaid and subsequently unmotivated teachers. In public schools it is common for the Ugandan government to pay the salaries of two-thirds of the teachers, with the Parent Teacher Associations covering salaries for the remaining educators. The discipline of the students within the schools was an important consideration, especially for NGOs sponsoring war-affected children. This study identifies three levels of discipline observed in schools: undisciplined, strict and authority-fearing discipline, and community-oriented structured discipline.

**TABLE 2**  
**Secondary Schools Surveyed**

Name	TCII Students?	Tuition in US\$ Per Term (Avg O & A-Levels)	2009 University Admission (%Accepted/%Govt)	Boys/ Girls/ Mixed
Pope John Paul II College, Gulu	Yes	325,000	58%/3%	Mixed? (Or just Girls)
Gulu Central H.S.	No	339,000	27%/0%	Mixed
Sacred Heart S.S.	Yes	306,250	74 students/4 students (no data on total #)	Girls
Bishop Angelo Negri College	Yes	295,000	62%/1%	Boys
Gulu High School	No	290,000	15 students/ 0 students*	Mixed (Special needs)
Pope Paul VI S.S., Anaka	Yes	195,000	46%/22%	Mixed
Graceland Girls College	No	282,000	N/A School Opened in 2008	Girls
St. Mary's College, Aboke	Yes	285,000	77%/20%	Girls
St. Joseph's College, Layibi	Yes	352,000	46%/09%	Boys
Uganda Martyrs S.S., Namugongo	No	670,000	100%/42%	Mixed
Seroma Christian H.S.	Yes	575,000	80%/10%	Mixed
St. Mary's College, Kisubi	No?	650,000	100%/35%	Boys
St. Mary's S.S., Kitende	Yes	610,000	637 Students / 201 Students*	Mixed
Bishop Cyprian Kihangire S.S., Luzira	No?	530,000	336 Students / 22 Students*	Mixed

**TABLE 3**  
**Primary Schools Surveyed**

<b>Name</b>	<b>TCII Students?</b>	<b>Tuition in US\$ Per Term (Avg P-Levels)</b>	<b>2009 P.L.E. Scores (%Div1/%Div2/%Div3+)</b>	<b>Boys/ Girls/ Mixed</b>
Bright Valley Primary School	Yes	372,500 (TCII pays 321,000)	70%/30%/0%	Mixed
Bishop Angelo Negri Primary School	Yes	271,000	50%/38%/12%	Boys
Mary Immaculate P.S.	Yes (1)	240,000	2%/98%/0%	Girls
Gulu Primary School	No	304,000	3%/83%/14%	Mixed (Special Needs)
Namugongo Girls P.S.	No	585,000	86%/14%/0%	Girls
St. Tereza Namiryango Girls P.S.	Yes	375,000	82%/18%/0%	Girls
Namilyango Junior Boys School	No	390,000	98%/2%/0%	Boys
St. Savio Junior Boys School	No	617,500	96%/4%/0%	Boys

First in our analysis is the category of “undisciplined,” which is characterized frequently by overcrowding, ambivalent teachers, and students who were unable or unwilling to focus on coursework or classroom lessons. These schools overwhelmingly tended to be public schools, which have been mandated to take on more students than their physical and material capacities. As a result, undisciplined schools provide the least favorable educational environment for war-affected youth. The absence of structure in school fails to offer youth alternatives to their experiences in the IDP camps or while living as child soldiers. And we find this is problematic because it does not provide them with the req-

uisite tools about how to manage their time and accomplish their learning goals in an organized and focused way.

The second category concerns those schools where the environment is strict and students fear authority. While overcrowding is common in these schools as well, it is managed through strict discipline. This category also includes schools in Kampala, where tuition and standards for admission are much higher than in the north because schools in Kampala were not affected by the war as much. While Kampala-based schools tend to perform better on standardized tests, including those for university admission, it is often difficult for war-affected children from northern Uganda to compete. The behavioral patterns of students in this second category of school tended to be very accommodating and compliant, but the drivers for that behavior vary from personal temperaments to fear of strong school administrators. The results, therefore, also vary widely for these schools in terms of their effectiveness as agents of reintegration and education. Schools that provide individualized attention to their students, such as St. Joseph's College (Layibi), showed significant strides in achievement among students.

The third group of schools encompasses those who orient discipline around community activities and embed learning within a community-driven sense of belonging and public involvement. Within these schools we observed students flourishing in curriculum that included gardening, and traditional music and dance. Teachers in this third category of school were trained in and committed to a holistic form of education that was significantly more student-centered than in the second category. Additionally, discipline in these schools had a far less punitive character and students were encouraged to focus on the consequences of their actions upon their schoolmates.

Using profile information and interview material from the following schools to more vividly illustrate the three categorizations, we are able to demonstrate the impact of different educational context upon the students. The following schools are most representative of their respective categories: Mary Immaculate, St. Joseph's College (Layibi), and St. Mary's College (Aboke).

*Category 1 School:* Mary Immaculate Mary Immaculate is a Catholic school that educates primary-school-age girls and accommodates both day students and boarders. The school was founded in the 1950s and sits near a large Catholic church in the Gulu District of northern Uganda. Within the confines of the school, health and sanitation standards visibly dropped relative to the surrounding communities. Most

of the children interviewed were sick, and the school's doctor remained absent for two weeks. His reason was, ironically, illness.

The school struggled to accommodate 929 students with only 17 full-time teachers. Students sat 5 to a desk row, often finding themselves in classes with 90-100 students per instructor. School administrators blamed the low teacher-to-student ratio and poor facilities on insufficient government funding. Academic performance for the whole school was declining. In 2004, 12 out of the 43 students (28 percent) who sat for the Primary Leaving Exam—the standard country-wide examination required for admission to secondary schools—scored in Division 1, roughly the top quarter of students who sit for the exam score in this division. In 2009, however, only one of sixty students (1.6 percent) scored in Division 1. In addition to dropping test scores, the students we interviewed claimed that others frequently stole their school supplies.

The sole beneficiary of The Child Is Innocent who attended Mary Immaculate primary school was an AIDS orphan named Martha.<sup>1</sup> Herself infected by HIV, Martha was sick but could not see the school's doctor "because he got sick and is no longer coming to see children" (2010). Martha had no pens or pencils because the other girls at the school had taken the supplies given to her by The Child Is Innocent at the beginning of the term. When discussing her declining performance in mathematics, Martha told us, "I cannot get extra help because my teacher demands money for providing help after class" (2010).

*Category 2 School: St. Joseph's College Layibi:* St. Joseph's College Layibi is an all-boys boarding school in the Gulu district of northern Uganda. Founded by Catholic missionaries, it opened in 1954 as a technical school. It was one of the best schools in the area until the 1990s when the school grounds were abandoned due to the war. It reopened in 2002, but suffers from the Universal Secondary Education policy implemented by the President Museveni that requires schools to accommodate many more students than their physical capacity. In August 2010, 1193 students attended St. Joseph's, yet the school's principal, Gregory, noted, "Officially speaking, we have accommodations for 600 students. The dormitories are very over crowded." Gregory acknowledged, "Many of our students were born in the IDP camps or spent time in the bush." He added with emphasis, "You can't expect a child that has spent a year in the bush to behave like a child that has grown up in the house of a minister. Some of these children have seen misery" (2010).

Similar to Mary Immaculate, St. Joseph's suffers from lack of government funding that is said to be allocated, but rarely come through. Yet, the prevailing attitude of school administrators and students is that they must accept this fact and move forward. As Gregory stated, "The rest of the nation is not waiting for us. They are studying the internet and we cannot get a computer lab. We will be playing catch-up for some time" (2010). For Gregory, this need for equitable resources was particularly important because of the student-body make-up: "The group currently in secondary school now is the generation that was most affected by the war. They really faced the war and the bush." After remarking that students currently fight over chairs and that there is only one bathroom, Gregory added, "As our facilities improve, so will our discipline" (2010).

Noticing a lack of support for war-affected students, Gregory shared ideas to build cohesion among The Child Is Innocent beneficiaries attending the school. Finding a teacher that would be willing to serve as the patron and give them individual and sustained support would build unity and ensure that as beneficiaries of sponsorship, these students would meet their academic and performance mandates. The school, Gregory hoped, could then call on the unit to participate in service activities as a group.

In general, children acknowledged that their head teacher, or principal, was "a very feared man." As a result, children would misbehave when teachers were not watching, but when teachers were in the classroom, the students maintained orderly behavior. This fear-based discipline manifested itself in their test scores, which were better than expected given the fact that the school is operating at almost twice its capacity. In 2009, 35 percent of students scored in Division 1 for the Uganda Certificate of Education exam—the standard country-wide examination for promotion to advanced schooling—at the end of their Ordinary-levels, and nearly 9 percent of graduates went on to universities on government scholarships.

In August 2010, The Child Is Innocent sent twenty-four students to St. Joseph's College. One student, Aroop, lived in the Tetugu IDP Camp during the first year of secondary school when he was recruited into the program. Initially, Aroop struggled in school and consistently exhibited negative behaviors towards his classmates, impacting their learning. Aroop's actions were so disruptive that the head teacher had to speak with him privately. Afterwards, his behavior improved; he performed very well on his Ugandan Certificate of Education exams,

which made him eligible to attend Seroma High School outside of Kampala for his advanced-levels. Aroop has now graduated from secondary school and The Child Is Innocent's program.

*Category 3 School: St. Mary's College Aboke:* St. Mary's College Aboke was founded in the 1950s by the Catholic Combori Sisters. It is an all-girls boarding school and has some of the lowest school fees in Uganda (285,000 Ugandan shillings per term) (2010). It is located in the northern Apac district. In 1996, St. Mary's College was the site of Joseph Kony's abduction of 139 students, famously known as the Aboke girls. Sister Rachele Fassera, the head teacher at the time, chased after Kony and his rebels and negotiated the release of 109 of the girls. Today, there is a large memorial that serves as a reminder of the event and the impact that the LRA had on life in northern Uganda.

Admission to St. Mary's is competitive and achieved by a two-part interviewing process with oral and written examination. On average, there are about 300 applicants per class, with 65 earning entrance. St. Mary's Aboke takes exceptional care of its poor students. Unlike other schools, Aboke allows its students to rent textbooks instead of purchasing new ones. Furthermore, all students—except those sitting for exams in the coming year—farm for at least thirty minutes per day. The school owns fifty acres of land behind the school and farms a variety of foods to supplement the rising cost of produce in Uganda. The Combori Sisters informed us that the farming serves as a “lesson for the children that digging is a part of life and a part of their culture” (2010). Children are fed four meals per day.

St. Mary's College Aboke, a private school sponsored by the Catholic Church, is privileged to be able to keep its numbers of students down to 357. With twenty full-time and ten part-time teachers, their low teacher-to-student ratio is one of the best out of the schools surveyed. Some of the teachers are nuns and others are professional educators, but most are paid less than government teachers at public schools. From 2007 through 2009, 24 percent of Ordinary-Level students scored in Division 1. Furthermore, 31 percent of graduates earned government scholarships to attend universities after their Advanced-Level examinations.

The students at St. Mary's College Aboke were less rambunctious and more confident presenting themselves to visitors than those at any of the other schools surveyed. The Combori Sisters remarked, “Our secret is discipline . . . . We pray as a school, and if we really need to punish a girl we forbid her from praying with her peers. They beg us

and beg us to avoid another punishment.” They continued, “We have a tradition of having goals and teaching children to study without being told.” The school also started a very active Peace Club, which has now spread to several other schools in the area.

In August of 2010, The Child Is Innocent sent three children (Eunice, Catherine, and Linda) to St. Mary’s College Aboke. While there, all three have exceeded expectations in performance. Both Eunice and Catherine were finishing their final year of secondary school and Linda was in her first year of Advanced-Levels. Eunice, who made mediocre grades while attending Sacred Heart Secondary School, was now poised to attend a university and Linda had finished the term as the top student in her class. The discipline and community oriented education of St. Mary’s encouraged these students to be outspoken leaders.

### **Implications of Research Findings**

Our research findings highlight the importance of focusing on the need to support community-oriented schools which are managed in disciplined but not authoritarian manner by education professionals. While it is not surprising that well-funded private schools will tend to outperform underfunded public schools, it is surprising that schools that insist on similar levels of discipline, but stress different forms of discipline, diverge in terms of their students’ reintegration techniques. While discipline matters in terms of creating a functioning learning environment, embedding it within a community-oriented approach that stresses individual accountability and group responsibility increases significantly the chances for the reintegration of war-affected youth. Similarly, it is important to highlight the importance of community-oriented work, such as farming, and its effect on war-affected students in terms of their increased ability to reconnect with their communities and to start engaging in trust-based group projects. Lastly, it is important to note that, while financial resources are necessary in order to achieve a minimum functional school environment, financial resources will not be sufficient by themselves in guaranteeing the reintegration of war-affected youth.

### **V. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, our study points to the need for targeted and concentrated financial assistance to community-oriented schools with clear

rules, well-trained teachers, and a discipline-based system that increases the students' accountability to their peers while embedding them within their communities. More specifically, our work merges existing claims about the need to focus financial assistance on specific educational programs with clear deliverables which should match the war-affected students' prewar educational achievements, age, and skill development (Blattman and Annan 2008). Besides government spending, aid resources and development assistance needs to be concentrated rather than diffused if it is to maximize impact.

Overall, our study supports with micro-level data the claims that stress the need for these schools to be well embedded within their communities seeking to engender norms of belonging and cooperation (Corbin 2008; Wessells 2005). Additionally, trained teachers, well-equipped schools and institutionalized procedures are critical to this process (Ovuga, Boardman, and Moro 2008). Largely, while we support the agency of war-affected youth (Angucia, Zeelen, and de Jong 2010), we want to reiterate the importance of discipline within the school environment: without a structured and disciplined school environment, war-affected youth will not be able to achieve a fully integrative reintegration regardless of the financial resources available to their schools.

## NOTES

1. We have changed the names of the interviewees in order to protect their identities and safeguard their confidentiality.

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