

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS



For Justice, Peace and Development

Annual Narrative Report 2018/2019



Cover Photo: Shear nut (yaa) trees cutting into logs to be burnt into Charcoal in Mede Parish, Palaro sub county Gulu district

ABSTRACT

More than 10 acres of forests are destroyed weekly in Pogo parish, Pabo Sub-county, and Okidi parish, Atiak sub-county of Amuru district. In 6 months', time there will be no more trees big enough to cut for charcoal or time.

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1.0 Background.

Human Rights Focus (HURIFO) is a human rights non-governmental organization registered in Uganda with a countrywide mandate to promote and defend human rights. It was founded in 1994 in Northern Uganda to respond to contemporary human rights issues affecting the community. Its geographical focus is the Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda.

HURIFO is governed by the Board of Directors (BoD) elected at the Annual General Assembly (AGM) and managed by appointed Executive Director.

HURIFO works with government, local, and national human rights organizations, networks and institutions in the areas of human rights, good governance, peace building and access to justice among others.

Mission

Promote the protection and respect of all human rights through strengthening local communities and duty bearers' capacity to effectively discharge their obligations and to demand and access services.

Vision

An environment where all human rights are fulfilled and enjoyed.

Objectives

1. To protect and promote human rights in HURIFO project areas.
2. To promote conflict transformation and transitional justice.
3. To promote good governance and accountability.
4. To strengthen the capacity of HURIFO members and governance.

HURIFO's Activities

- 1) Human rights monitoring, documentation, and reporting.

- 2) Human rights research and advocacy.
- 3) Provision of Legal aid services to the indigents in the communities (i.e. offers legal representation, legal advice, guidance, counseling and mediation services to victims of human rights violations and abuses).
- 4) Carries out human rights training and sensitization of community members.

Core Values

- i. **Impartiality:** We seek to be impartial at all times in dealing with clients.
- ii. **Integrity, Honesty, and Accountability:** We endeavor to operate with integrity, honesty, and accountability and in a professional way.
- iii. **Gender Equity and Equality:** We are committed to gender equity and equality in diversity in the workplace and operating environment.
- iv. **Human Rights Respect and justice for all:** We respect the rights and value the contribution of each other and endeavor to do justice to all.
- v. **Team spirit:** We are committed to teamwork, collegiality, and solidarity.
- vi. **Commitment and perseverance:** We promote self-giving and rededication to one's duty as well as between and among staff and stakeholders.

1.1. Executive Summary

Land related violence, environmental violence (deforestation for charcoal) and torture were the most perilous human right issues that the community faced in the period 2018/2019. Of the total 109 (50 reported by male clients and 59 by female) human rights complaints received, 31 (17 reported by male clients and 14 by female) were land-related. Torture is still exercised in Uganda prisons, police stations and by army officers. Two people were suspected tortured to death in Uganda prison in Pader district. Former inmates narrate hideous experiences of tortures through beating during work, denial of food, and beating in detention perpetrated by prison warders and prefects in prisons. Meanwhile deforestation for charcoal has hit Acholi sub-region so much that in Pogo parish, Pabo sub-county and Okidi parish, Atiak sub-county in Amuru district, forests are destroyed at alarming rate of more than 10 acres per week that in 6 month time, a depletion of trees big enough for charcoal or timber is projected without immediate action to stop the trade.

1. **Trainings of clan leaders.** Conducted 3 trainings for 159 (male 132 and female 27) clan leaders (i.e. clans' chairpersons, secretaries and women clan leaders), police and parish chiefs from Lukung sub county, Lamwo district.
2. **Trainings of local councilors.** Conducted 6 trainings for 272 (male 251 and female 21) Local Councilors I & IIs from Pajule, Atanga, Angagura and Ogom Sub Counties and Pajule and Atanga Town Councils.
3. **Training of Community Environmental Monitors (CEMs).** Selected and trained 66 youth (male 56 and female 10) from the 11 sub counties in five districts (Amuru, Pader, Omoro, Nwoya and Gulu) and trained them as Community Environmental Monitors.
4. **Community Dialogue.** The GBV dialogue in Bungatira has helped to reduce GBV cases in the areas by addressing the causes. It was attended by 86 (male 45 and female 41) stakeholders that comprises of Local Council Chairpersons and councilors 1-5 (46); Clan leaders (7 women + 7 men), youth leader (1), Community

development officer (1), police (2), community representatives (12), development partners (6) and 4 people from the office of the RDC Gulu

5. **Community Sensitizations on environmental awareness.** 10 sensitization meetings attended by 425 people (male 308 and female 117) in the Sub Counties of Atiak, Pabbo, Amuru in Amuru district; Pader, Lapul and Angagura in Pader district; Lungulu, Koch-Lii and Koch-Goma in Nwoya district; Odek (Omor district) and Palaro in Gulu district.

As results of the above activities, clan leaders appreciated human rights and deleted off unconstitutional clauses from their bye-laws. The Local Councils were empowered and there are some improvement in their administrative and judicial roles (reduced complaints of corruption, gender biases), from community. The Community environmental Monitors are now active in monitoring, documenting and timely reporting on environmental and human rights issues in the communities. Communities are now vigilant about their environment and take charge to report any destructive activities. There is now reduced GBV cases in Bungatira Sub County and duty bearers are more committed to addressing cases of GBV and criminality in the sub county.

Signed



Odongyoo Francis
Executive Director

1.2. Context Analysis

1.2.1. Land conflicts related human rights violations and abuses.

HURIFO's annual statistics for the year 2018/2019 shows that violence related to land was the most reported individual and groups human rights complaints received in the organization and accounted for 31 complaints (17 reported by male clients and 14 by female) of the total 109 (50 reported by male clients and 59 by female) received. The period also witnessed 234 residents of Apaa who took refuge in the office of United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) compound in Gulu following their harassment, tortures, and destruction of their property including 844 huts to drive them away from their land by Uganda Wildlife Authority, Uganda People Defense Force and Uganda Police.

1.2.2. Torture, inhumane and degrading treatment.

Torture is still a common crime committed by the police, prison, the army and Uganda Wild Life Authority (UWA) against suspects. During a District Chain Link (DCC) visit to Uganda prison, in Pader district (Kineni) in March 2019, a woman inmate narrated to the team how she was assaulted, beaten and her breast twisted by a male police in Pajule when she was arrested, as the District Police Commander (DPC) Pader district kept shouting in defense "she is a liar, she is a liar". Just a month after the DCC visit, an inmate, one Anywar Dominic from Coo-rom East village, Ogom subcounty was allegedly tortured to death in prison detention and family forced to take the body and burry amid discontent of the postmortem report that the deceased died of malaria and diarrhea. Hardly a month after the alleged torture to death of Anywar, another inmate, Okello Bosco of Misiri Village, Pukor Parish, Ogom sub-county, Pader district who attempted to escape beating during digging, was re-arrested and tortured by fellow inmates Rubangakene Keneth, and Kolo, and later finished off by prison officer Tumwine. Postmortem report carried out on the late Okello shows he could have died as a result of broken neck and multiple bruises. Inmates die of torture related allegation every year in Uganda prison (Kineni) in Pader district. In August 2016, Oyoo was allegedly tortured to death in Uganda Prisons Pader district, in 2018 a debtor was arrested by court bailiff from Jinja taken to Kineni prison and pronounced dead the next day.

Ex-convicts or remandees from Kineni government prison talked of terrible tortures in the prison sanctioned by prison authorities and exercised by prefects / bakulu. Reports from Gulu Central prison, women section talked of “detention within detention” a practice roundly denied by prison authority there.

In Gulu central Police station, slapping suspects who refuse to talk during interrogation by detectives, and fellow suspects in police cell forcing new suspects to slap walls are common human rights violations of suspects. Meanwhile in Omoro district the case of torture of a suspect in the police detention was referred to Police professional Standard Unit in Gulu. The torture cases attributed to the army were mostly by army officers guarding private farms of some army officers and their spouses as were the cases in Gotapwoyo and Lungulo sub counties in Nwoya district. Among the clan leaders, torture have reduced mostly to clans that have not been trained on Prohibition and prevention of Torture Act, 2012.

1.2.3. Access to justice

Access to justice to victims of human rights violations and abuses is a nightmare in most magisterial areas in Acholi sub region. Cases of loss of files were common in Pader and Amuru districts that some magistrates threatened to dismiss some cases. In Nwoya district, victims of torture perpetrated by Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF) have tracked to court since 2017 that their case file numbers CRB 909/2017; CRB 998/2017; CRB 1020/2017, among others were reported lost. Earlier reported cases of assault, grievous harm, attempted murder (S/D19/12/10/2017), (S/D 19/04/11/2017) committed by the UPDF against the civilian have never been investigated. Cases of lost files were found in Pader court, from victim in Aware Sub County in Pader district. Furthermore, in Pader court, nearly all non-cash bail were paid cash behind the court order. HURIFO saw a copy of non-cash bail document which was paid for cash 300,000/= not receipted and at the same time the bailed person was in prison cell. HURIFO randomly interviewed 8 people who were given bail, five of them showed us bail document written N/C but they had paid cash saying they did not know what N/C meant.

In Agago district, some court officials got money from suspecting rural court users who visit court for help. During court visit in late June, our anti-corruption monitor met an old woman who was being demanded to pay 100,000/= allegedly to facilitate the said court official to issue arrest warrant and arrest someone who had jumped court bail. Our anti-corruption officer took the money to the said officer, but found that he had gone on annual leave.

1.2.4. Gender based violence

Gender based violence constituted 27 of the 109 complaints received at HURIFO in 2018/2019. It took the form of child / family neglects, assaults, abuses, rape and defilement. Gender based violence have far reaching consequences on the children and dependents.

1.2.5. Environmental violence / deforestation for charcoal.

Field findings showed that Acholi districts have been hit by massive deforestation that in the areas of Pogo parish of Pabo subcounty, Okidi in Atiak subcounty all in Amuru district, forests were being destroyed at the rate of 10 hectares per week. Elsewhere in Ongany parish in Pader, and Angagura sub counties all in Pader district, there are virtually no more *Africana afzelia* trees left that can be cut for timber. The turn is now on shea nut trees which is also under threat of extinction without immediate action to stop the trade.

2.0. PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

2.1. Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.

2.1.1. Training clan leaders and review of clan byelaws.

Clan bye-laws had become the main avenue for promoting corporal punishment, women discrimination and disempowerment. This is because the byelaws contain clauses that deny women to access resources such as land and inheritable property and opportunities and promote corporal punishment which often contravene human rights principles and the laws. To address this challenge, HURIFO conducted 3 trainings that targeted the clan leaders; Clan Chairpersons, Clan Secretaries and Women Clan leaders from Lukung sub county, Lamwo district and trained them on human rights concepts and responsibilities, land rights, laws on corporal punishment, marriage and divorce as amended. A total of 159 people (male 132 and female 27) from 32¹ clans were trained. They comprised of 27 women clan leaders, 27 clan secretaries (all male), 100 clan Chairpersons (all male), 2 representatives from Ker Kal Kwaro - Lokung (all male), 1 policeman and 2 Parish Chiefs (all male). After the training, the clan representatives requested for the review of their byelaws and all their byelaws were reviewed and aligned to the human rights principles and the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

¹ The 32 clans were from Pagot, Pacwera, Pajele, Pucii, Panyanyiri, Lamogi, Pacwa, Pubala, Paluo, Payugi, Lonai, Pawor, Olebi, Pakalabule, Patika, Pubel, Pudeng, Paiwango, Pulugongo, Panyaming, Anyibi, Ker Kal Kwaro Lokung, Pagaya, Irumu, Pumwonydyang, Koyo, Ding, Pupul, Lawiya, Punyago, Patinga and Pajulu Kal.



Figure 1 Participants after the training and review of clan by law in Lamwo District



Figure 2 Clan leaders of Adilang Sub County, Agago district during a review of clan bye laws

2.1.2. Training of Local Councilors I, II, and Clan Leaders.

The Local Council I & IIs were trained to empower them with knowledge and skills to carry out their administrative and adjudicature roles effectively and take justice closer to the people they serve. The training followed complaints from the public that LCs were corrupt, do not handle mediation well instead they passed judgement, charge high court fees, fines and hear cases beyond their mandates and many times they passed judgments basing on one's gender or financial status, thereby denying fair justice to many poor people. Women and the poor in particular could not access fair justice from these leaders who were never trained or oriented to their works since their election.



HURIFO, therefore, conducted six trainings which targeted all the Local Councilors I & IIs from six sub-counties in Pader district which included Pajule, Atanga, Angagura, and Ogom Sub Counties and Pajule and Atanga Town Councils. A total of 272 (male 251 and female 21) LC1s and 23 LC IIs all male was trained. Of the 249 LC Is 228 were male and 21female. The topics covered

included human rights concepts and the laws, children and women’s rights, Gender Based violence, land rights, family laws (marriage, divorce will be writing, child custody, etc.), the LC courts system and mediation skills.

2.1.3. Training of Community Environmental Monitors (CEMs).

In the period, HURIFO identified and trained 66 youth (male 56 and female 10) from the 11 sub-counties in five districts and trained them as Community Environmental Monitors (CEMs). They were trained on human rights, environmental rights, and monitoring, documentation, and reporting. After their training they were commissioned to monitor,

document and timely report on environmental and human rights issues.



Community Environmental Monitors (CEMs) paused for a photograph after their training.

2.1.4. Joint Community Dialogue

This was a demand-driven activity conducted in Bungatira Sub-county to respond to the public outcry on the heightened cases of GBV and criminality in the sub-county. A rapid assessment report from the sub-county had indicated unprecedented incidences of drug abuses, drunkenness, domestic violence, rape, defilement and sometimes killing, yet the duty bearers were not doing enough to respond to the deteriorating human rights situation.

The dialogue was jointly organized by HURIFO, United Nations Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOCHR), Centre for Alternative Development (CAD), International Justice Mission (IJM), Gulu Wheel Chair Basket Ball club, Gulu district Local Government, and the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Gulu. The dialogue brought together 86 (male 45 and female 41) stakeholders that comprises of Local Council Chairpersons and councilors 1-5 (46); Clan leaders (7 women + 7 men), youth leader (1), Community development officer (1), police (2), community representatives (12), development partners (6) and 4 people from the office of the RDC Gulu. As a result of this dialogue which was also organized to specially commemorate the international women day, the leaders recommitted themselves to addressing all violence against women and people in the area.

2.1.5. Community Sensitizations

Activities that have been implemented under these projects include 10 sensitization meetings attended by 425 people (male 308 and female 117) in the Sub Counties of Atiak, Pabbo, Amuru in Amuru district; Pader, Lapul and Angagura in Pader district; Lungulu, Koch-Lii and Koch-Goma in Nwoya district; Odek in Omoro district and Palaro in Gulu district.



The dissemination meetings/sensitizations provided a platform for discussing the research findings and recommendation on Environment in Acholi. In the meetings, several concerns, thoughts, and initiatives were raised that is helping in mitigating the impacts of violence caused on the environment through charcoal-driven deforestation and logging for timber.

The sensitization meetings covered 4 districts and 10 sub counties as follows; Gulu was done in Palaro sub-county attended by 45 (38male+7 female) participants; Pader were in Angagura Sub-county 47 participants(11female +36 male); Pader Sub County 42 participants (32 male+10 female), Lapul Sub County 34 participants(25 males +9females); Nwoya district were in Lungulu Sub County 55 (37males+18females), Lii Sub County 43 (27 females+16 males), and Goma 63 (48 females +15 males); and Amuru district, Atiak Sub County 28 (20males+8females), Pabbo Sub County 45 (27 males+18 females), and Amuru Sub County 23 (18males +5females). Altogether there was 425 participants 308 of whom were male while 117 were female.



HURIFO staff sensitizing people prior to mediation in Nwoya District.

Three (3) community outreaches (sensitization meetings) were also held in areas with most destruction of the vegetation; Lungulu Sub County in Nwoya district, Pabbo Sub County in Amuru district and Lapul Sub County in Pader district. The topics covered were; the impact of environmental destruction, state of environmental destruction and mitigation measures. 182 participated (male 122 and female 60) took part in the sensitizations. Pabbo sub-county, Amuru district had the highest attendant of 97 participants (63 males +34 females) and Pabbo among the worst, parish Pogo with a very

high rate of forest destruction for charcoal. Fifty-one people attended Pader sensitization and 34 in Lungulu, Nwoya district 22 male +12female.



Stakeholders during research dissemination meeting in Lapul Sub County, Pader district on 9th April 2019.

2.1.6. Provision of Legal Aid Services.

A total of 109 complaints were received in the year 2018/2019. Fifty-nine complaints were reported by females while male reported 50. Land conflicts related complaints were 31, Gender Based Violence 29 (i.e. family neglect 27 and defilement 2), criminal complaints were 20, access to justice were 4 and others were 25. The complaints were received through various means, but walk-in- clients constituted the most. One mobile legal aid clinic was conducted in Pangira Parish, Lukung Sub County, Lamwo district. It was attended by 40 participants (20 female and 20 male). During the clinic, 9 complaints that comprised of land disputes 6, and GBV 2 and one of compensation were received. The clinics were preceded by sensitizations on the basic laws, human rights, and responsibilities. The sensitization prepared the community for mediation from a human rights lens.

Out of the 109 cases that were received during the reporting period, 8 that comprised of 5 child neglect and 3 land disputes were successfully mediated and resolved. A total of 26

complaints of which 10 were criminal were referred to police, 9 labour related complaints were referred to labour office, and 5 cases were referred to Local Council 1,2, &3.



HURIFO's staff conducting mediation in Agago District.

Majority of HURIFO's clients; 70% (i.e. 75 complaints-male 35 and female 40) were provided legal guidance and counselling regardless of whether or not they qualify for our support. The complaints resolved through this approach include 7 torture, 20 cases of child neglect, delayed justice 4, land disputes 23, medical negligence 2, compensation 3, contract 3 and GBV 2 among others.

2.1.7. Litigation.

HURIFO had 17 cases on-going in different courts at the beginning of the year 2018/2019. In the course of the year, 4 cases were resolved in favour of our clients and one case dismissed. Of the two land cases judged in favor of our clients, besides giving back the land to them, one of them was awarded 10 million to be paid by the defendant. Application of letter of administration was also granted to our client but one case of torture in which our client sought compensation was dismissed for laxity of the client to attend court. This means that HURIFO now has 13 cases going on different court. They comprised of 6 cases of compensation, 5 cases of land, 1 case of employment and 1 public interest case of the nodding syndrome.

2.1.8. Networking and collaboration with state and non-state actors.

In the year ended 2018/2019, HURIFO networked and collaborated with partners and stakeholders in a number of ways. It networked and collaborated with United Nations Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOCHR), Centre for Alternative Development (CAD), International Justice Mission (IJM), Gulu Wheel Chair Basket Ball club, Gulu district Local Government, and the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Gulu in addressing GBV in Bungatira sub county.

HURIFO also strategically networked and collaborated for strategic reasons like for commemoration of International Women’s Day celebrated in Nwoya and Gulu districts; International Human Rights Day (December 10th) 2019; 16 days of gender activism; open court day and international conference, among others.

HURIFO also collaborated with Cambridge University, Makerere University and Gulu University in a research on environmental justice in Acholi sub region which research was launched in October 2018 in Gulu district. The organisation is an active member of the Acholi Technical Committee on Charcoal (ATCC). It participated in a community dialogue and consultation meetings on Charcoal Bill by Acholi Technical Committee on Charcoal organised by African Center for Research in Binya Parish, Odek Sub County, Omoro district; Pader Kilak Sub County in Pader district, Adilang Sub County in Agago district and Lagoro Sub County in Kitgum.

2.2. Promotion of Conflict Transformation and Transitional Justice.

The research, “Environmental Justice that HURIFO conducted jointly with the Cambridge, Makerere, and Gulu universities was done within the transitional justice in northern Uganda. HURIFO is now implementing two sister projects, transforming policy and expanding public engagement around charcoal driven deforestation in Uganda; and towards sustainable charcoal in Uganda: shaping policy and supporting civil society organisations through quality research. The projects are being implemented in Amuru, Gulu, Pader, Nwoya, and Omoro districts (detail report in Appendix A).

2.3. Strengthen the Capacity of HURIFO Members and Governance.

2.3.1. Staff Capacity Building.

In the year ending 2018/2019 HURIFO sent staffs for capacity building as follows;

- The Programme Officer, Research and Advocacy Officer and Human Rights Monitor (Nwoya district) were trained on resource mobilization and sustainability organized by USAID GAPP (Governance, Accountability, Participation, and Performance). The training has improved on the knowledge and skills in proposal writing.
- The Human Rights Protection Officer was trained on human rights case database management and human rights advocacy on the national, regional and international mechanisms organized by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The training enhanced her skills and she now accurately register (document) cases of human rights violations/abuses in a pre-developed case database.
- Other skills which the Human Rights Protection Officer was trained in were; business, human rights and corporate accountability organized by Advocates San Frontiers and Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET); strengthening synergies to bridge the gaps in legal aid service provisions in Uganda organized by Law Council and Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET) and monitoring, documentation and reporting as protection mechanism for Human Rights Defenders organized by the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders (NCHRD-U).
- The Executive Director and Finance Manager participated in policy development training organized by USAID- GAPP. As a resulted they were able to revise Finance Policy and Procedures.