The efforts of non-governmental organizations in assessing and documenting the violations of women's human rights in situations of armed conflict: The Isis – WICCE experience

Expert paper prepared by:

**Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng
Isis - WICCE**

Preamble.

Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) is a non-governmental global action-oriented women's Organisation established in Geneva Switzerland in 1974. Since its inception Isis-WICCE has endeavoured to promote justice and women's human rights through documentation of the violation of their rights; facilitating exchange of skills to further empower women to take control of their lives by documenting their realities; strengthening communication mechanisms for the women to be able to generate knowledge about their situations and to share the information, ideas and experiences in order to improve their status and overcome gender inequality.

During the 1970's to 1980's the approach used by the organisation to fulfil its mandate was to document and process secondary information on and about women, and systematically avail its a documentation centre for easy accessibility of the literature to those in need of the information. Isis-WICCE also organised exchange visits whereby women human rights activists form different parts of the world were brought together for a period of one month to share their experiences and learn from one another. The testimonies shared by the participants were then documented, published and disseminated worldwide for raising awareness about the plight of women in various communities of the world[1], as well as lobbying for redress. This approach provided numerous collections of qualitative data on and about women's lives.

By the 1990's the organisation had evolved, necessitating it to be relocated to a region where its outputs were needed most. Africa, where very little information regarding women's lives had been researched on and documented, was identified as the most suitable region where this vibrant and unique women's resource centre could be located. In 1993 Isis-WICCE moved to Uganda with the aim of tapping the voices of the African woman.

The numerous and obvious negative circumstances in Africa dictated the approach the organisation had to adopt in collecting data about women's status. This change in approach was also influenced by two major International Instruments, the 1993 Vienna Declaration, that called for respect of women's human rights; and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (**particularly strategic objective D.2, and action to be taken as highlighted in section 129 a, b and c[2]),** that, among other issues, calls for the "promotion of research and data collection, and compilation of statistics …relating to the prevalence, the causes, nature, seriousness and consequences of the violence against women…disseminate the findings…"

Challenges in Documenting Women's Realities

The relocation of Isis-WICCE to Uganda opened the organisation to many challenges in its effort to collect data on and about women's realities. These included marginalisation of research as a component in policy formulation, at national level, particularly on issues concerning women's human rights, causing a big hurdle for Isis-

---

[1] Isis- Journey: A documentary Philippines: Isis-WICCE and Isis-Manila. 2003.Duration 30minutes

WICCE to overcome, since there was literally no base to build on or refer to. By 1996, there was very scanty information about the experiences of women in conflict situation. For example, (Bernnett: 1995) conducted a survey that documented testimonies of a few women in Gulu District, in northern Uganda, highlighting the violations that they had experienced. World vision and UNICEF (1997) and Human Rights Watch (1997) surveys all focused on the children. There was no evidence of concrete national survey carried out on violence against women in situations of armed conflict

The other challenge relates to the fact that, due to high levels of illiteracy, majority of women in Africa and Uganda in particular still communicate orally. Communication however, is still a big problem for women given the violations marginalisation of their status in society. Therefore, this leaves women with no established mechanisms and platform to tell their stories. This left Isis-WICCE with no option but to reach out to them in their remote and unconnected villages, bringing yet a major challenge of mobilisation of adequate resources, in an environment that had little regard for research on women's human rights. This also required a lot of time if detailed data on the violations committed against women was to be collected.

Isis-WICCE Bridging the Gap

In order for Isis-WICCE to contribute to its vision of building an informed society that values and ensures women's rights, and promote the full realisation of their capacities and potential, it was imperative that Isis-WICCE focused most of its efforts to document women's experiences in order to provide valuable data/information that would help individuals, communities, as well as other actors to make effective analysis that would make informed decisions on post national rehabilitation plans to improve the lives of women.

Due to lack of evidence of established national mechanism committed to collecting data on violence against women in Uganda, many women organisations and human rights organisations (especially after the Nairobi Conference 1975and the Beijing conference 1995), took it upon themselves to record incidents and the prevalence of violence against women at their different areas of operation, with domestic violence as a major focus[3]. The Population Secretariat (Ministry of Finance), in collaboration with UNFPA supported a number of women NGOs to collect data on gender based violence in two specified districts in Uganda.[4]

Realising the fact that there was very limited information about the realities of women in situations of armed conflict, Isis-WICCE took a deliberate step to utilize the two international instruments (the 1993 Vienna declaration, and 1995 Beijing Platform for Action), as its framework of operation and to channel a considerable amount of the organisation's energy into documenting the violations of women's human rights in situations of armed conflict in Africa with Uganda as a starting point. In Uganda, Isis-WICCE has collected data on women's experiences in situations of armed conflict in 7 districts that were/ are generally grossly affected.

---

[3] Project Report on Domestic Violence Study. Law and Advocacy for women (law-U); FIDA- Uganda, Action for Development (ACFODE), Uganda Women Network, Amnesty international
[4] An Assessment of Gender Based Violence in Apac and Mbale Districts of Uganda. UNFPA, 2002.

The Documentation Process in Uganda

- *Conducive Environment*

Documenting the experiences of women in conflict situation particularly where states are also involved in the conflict is a very sensitive matter. However, in order for one to get the true situation of the prevalence and magnitude of the violations committed to women particularly on their sexuality, it is necessary to carry out the documentation when the environment is peaceful with less movement of people and little fear of new attacks. In Uganda, the district of Luweero in central part of Uganda was the most appropriate to start with since at the time of beginning the survey (1997), the guns had fallen silent.

Further more, the government of Uganda had put in place enabling political machinery, and a conducive environment that favoured the empowerment of women[5].

- *Literature Review*

Isis-WICCE used this opportunity to carry out all the necessary approaches to fulfill its goal. One of them being to review the literature that was available on the conflicts in Uganda with the aim of getting the general picture of how the mainstream history of wars in Uganda was reported. This was mainly done in order to analyse how much of what was reported specifically reflected women's experiences. As expected, it was confirmed that women's experiences of violations and torture during the conflicts that have taken place in Uganda was lacking in the mainstream literature (Musisi et al 1997:7). Most of the literature accessed concentrated on the causes of conflict, how the wars were fought, the general picture on the destruction of infrastructure, who had won the wars, and the estimated number of the dead without even giving any gender desegregated analysis of the dead, such as (Kirunda A.M: 1995;Museveni Kaguta: 1997;Kasozi A.B.K: 1999).

The reference to women was in most cases contained in one paragraph about displacement and/or rape, without considering an explanation on the emotional and physical consequences to their bodily integrity, and to the entire community. It was evident that the documentation/research was silent about women's views, the problems they experienced, the magnitude of the effect of the conflict to their lives, and the roles they played in keeping sanity within the communities during and after the conflict situations. This meant that in the history books of Uganda, women's stories of the armed conflicts was lacking.

- *Objectives of the Isis-WICCE studies*

Therefore, Isis-WICCE's major objective and approach in documenting the experiences of women in situations of armed conflict was to include a correct and comprehensive feminist perspective of armed conflict in the mainstream history of

---

[5] The Uganda Constitution of 1995 article 33calls for the protection and promotion of women's human rights; The National Gender Policy, 1997highlights the roles of the institutional framework to achieve the is goal, and in 1999 developed a plan of action on women's empowerment. Establishment of Women Councils whose key objective is to monitor the status of women and implement government plans of action.

conflict in Uganda. It was therefore, necessary to determine the nature and extent of the crimes committed against women and girls, and the consequences of these crimes to their livelihood[6]. It was also crucial for Isis-WICCE to document women's coping mechanisms, highlighting the roles they play in the said situations, and how much redress had been done to deal with the aftermath of war to women specific realities[7]. This data has been a vital resource for Isis-WICCE post conflict programmes, and for other human rights activists in planning for advocacy for redress, as well as holding accountable the different actors responsible for women's security and well being.

- *Conceptualisation of the process*

After the literature review Isis-WICCE, invited some experts[8] to be part of the development of a concept document that highlighted the aim and objectives for carrying out data collection on violence against women in conflict situations from a feminist perspective. The objective of the concept document was to: raise awareness to public, women's NGO's, human Rights activists, bilateral agencies, and relevant UN bodies, about the violence and aggression targeted at and experienced by women. The concept also discussed the importance of providing women a platform to speak about the armed conflict in order for society to acknowledge the roles they play(ed) during the conflict, and get compensated for the violations they experienced. It also analysed documentation as an empowerment tool to women's development.

The concept was also in line with the analysis of some specialists, which indicated that if an opportunity is given to survivors of violence to talk about their negative experiences it becomes an effective therapy for their healing process (Musisi, 1997; Leibling, 2004).

The concept also outlined the study focus as being, to collect data on women's health and socio-economic status. The concept proposed the methodology to be used in carrying out the studies in the target districts, including the sampling procedures, sample size, method of data collection i.e. in-depth interviews followed by probes, case studies focus group discussions, observations and interviews with key informants.

- *National Consultative Meetings*

A national consultative meeting comprising of about 30 key stakeholders from the affected communities, drawn from both national and district levels follow the conceptualisation process for each study area.[9] The aim of the meetings before the data collection process was to build relationships with the different key stakeholders, provided opportunity for Isis-WICCE to share the objectives of the proposed study,

---

[6] Documenting the Experiences of Women in Uganda: Luwero Distrct (1997); Gulu District (1999); The Teso Region (north eastern); 2002; and Kitgum District (2003)

[7] Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng: The scars on Women's Minds and Bodies: Women's Roles in Post Conflict Reconstruction in Uganda. In Canadian Women's Studies. Vol. 2 no. 2 p. 23-27

[8] Researchers, medical professionals and a demographer

[9] **Isis-WICCE carried out research on the Experiences of Women in Situations of Armed Conflict in the districts of Luwero (central region ;1997), Gulu and Kitgum (north; 1999;2004) and Katakwi, Kumi and Soroti (north eastern; 2002)**

and discuss different issues of concern to the process (i.e the draft questionnaire) with the identified persons.

The national participants included representatives in Parliament, community development workers and women leaders form the proposed study area; some of the known survivors of the conflicts from the areas; and medical professionals and researchers from the academia also participated. The team involved in the conceptualisation process would also attend the meetings. This approach did not only prove to be very effective in making the different stakeholders own the process, but it also endorsed their approval of the need to collect data on women human rights violations in conflict situation, an area that many researchers had remained silent about.

The other major roles played by the consultative meetings involved discussing how the suggested methodology and questionnaire could appropriately be applied without affecting the social and cultural norms of the affected people. The consultations were also useful in assessing the risks the documenters would face while in the field. The meetings also developed contingency plans for the documentation process. Since it would usually not be possible to cover all the affected communities, the meetings also discussed and approved the proposed geographical location in relation to the expected outcome. For example the Luweero triangle (in Central Uganda), which was affected by armed conflict between 1980-1985, covered over 10 districts. It was therefore important to get ideas about the area of study that would provide a good representation of the magnitude and prevalence of the human rights violation against women in the affected districts. The leadership at the community level were usually knowledgeable about the actions that happened in each community in their localities, hence, their involvement at this level.

The consultative meetings were also aimed at influencing policy makers to recognize the importance of documentation in their respective roles as planners for post conflict rehabilitation, and thus provide budgeting for research and development. The meetings were also important strategy to identify allies who would influence other local leaders and community members of the affected areas to embrace the proposal. Most of all, it was crucial to involve policy makers given the sensitivity of the subject, and the anticipated outcomes, some of which could end up implicating the government in place in some of the violations[10].

- **Reconnaissance Visits at the Local Level**

Isis-WICCE experience of the above process shows that by the end of the national consultative meetings, many new ideas would have been shared, developed and incorporated into the working document and the draft questionnaire. For example, the appropriate questions to ask and the kind of villages to target for the study. In most cases majority of those involved in the consultative meetings have in many occasions endorsed the process and become party to it. This has proved to be an important outcome for Isis-WICCE because; the introduction of the study proposal to the study areas (at community level) had full support of the leadership of the local community.

---

[10] In the case of northern Uganda the conflict is between the Lords Resistance Army Rebels and the present Government soldiers

This made it easier for the ordinary local community to internalise the importance of the proposed documentation to their well-being.

The stakeholders who got involved in the reconnaissance visits to the study area, included some of the leaders who participated in the national consultative meeting. This gave the local community an affirmation of the importance of the project, as well as seeking their participation since they are very instrumental in making the project succeed. For example, it is the local leaders who are conversant with the human resource in their localities who would be instrumental in the carrying out the documentation. They are also able to provide solutions to local problems that may affect the documentation process.

A good example to refer to is the point raised by the local leaders about the importance of involving the local community members such as nurses, teachers, opinion leaders and local councillors, if the objective of documenting in-depth testimonies of the gender based violations inflicted on women and girls was to be achieved. The experience from the visits revealed that unless such community members were part of the data collection process, it would be very difficult for women survivors of war to discuss their sexuality in public or be able to talk about "confidential" circumstances such as rape, vaginal mutilations, forced incest that they may have experienced.

It was argued that culturally such personal cases are only told to the female elders who then plan for strategies for redress. It was observed that it was however, possible for the survivors to share these experiences with school women head teachers, councillors and nurses. It was also revealed that the survivors would feel more comfortable to relate to their own community dwellers, rather than share the ordeal with strangers. This caused Isis-WICCE to re-adjust its methodology to include a training component for provision of basic skills building in data collection that would enable to the persons recruited from the local community to carry out some simple documentation.

▪ *Training Local Leaders*

Isis-WICCE staff team and the chief investigator conduct the training of locally recruited documenters most of whom are usually of an education level of the Ordinary Certificate of Education and above. They undertake a five-day vigorous basic training national and international laws about human rights, principles of documentation and the need to carry out women focussed documentation. The training also provides basic skills in using tools such as tape recorders and photography.

The national training team then discusses with the trainees the various methods used in the documentation process such as purposive/random selection of individual interviewees and focus group discussants. A step-by-step interview process is provided[11]. One full day is allocated for the trainees' understanding of the questionnaire and to be able to translate it into the local language of the affected area. The last two days are set aside specifically for practical fieldwork and pre-testing of

---

[11] Isis-WICCE Training manual for Beginners in Documenting Women's Realities Especially in Situation of Armed Conflict. Revised Edition. September 2001.

the questionnaire, and to test the trainees' adoption of the knowledge acquired as well as review their performance. Any limitations identified are then rectified. The skills building continue through out the documentation process especially during the de-briefing period.

Building the capacity of community leaders in documentation has been a great resource especially as it demystifies the problem of language barrier as well as empowering the community for future documentation and intervention. It also reduces suspicions about the project and is a vital resource in providing solutions on methods of approaching men to allow their women to participate in the project.

- *Selection of the Research Team*

After the training, the organisation makes the selection of the national research team. In order to have an all round expertise, the team would be led by a research consultant who would usually be identified from the academia, with preference being given to a demographer, for purposes of analysing the collected data.

From both national consultative meeting and reconnaissance visit interactions, it became evident that documenters would face horrifying testimonies and hence Isis-WICCE's decision to include a psychologist on the research team so as to deal with the expected trauma through daily de-briefing sessions. An Isis-WICCE staff team of four programme officers is part of the research team to focus the documentation in a feminist perspective direction. The twelve identified and trained team are very critical for directing the team on issues of culture, language, body language and identification of the locations identified by the respondents where crime is purported to have occurred for further investigations.

- *The Field work*

The filed work takes about one month where data is first collected from the key informant, followed by the focus group discussions. The in- depth interview respondents are identified from the group discussions, and from some of the individual respondent. Areas mentioned by the respondent as spots of crime are also visited to corroborate their stories with communities leaving in the areas at the time of data collection. Each category of respondent is provided with a specific instrument to guide the interview. The consultant, the psychologist and a member of Isis-WICCE staff mostly carry out sensitive cases, after the local documenter has prepared the respondent. Every evening the research team reviews the data collected, its performance for the day and plans for the nest day. Any mistakes made are corrected. During this time the psychologist also carries out counselling.

After the social science study is accomplished, the data is shared with the medical team who them then prepares its own scientific survey instrument and collects quantitative data in the identified area outside the studied areas by the social science team, but within the same district. The survey is followed by an emergence medical intervention for critical cases for the entire area documented by both teams as explained below.

Other Approaches to data collection

- *Fact finding missions /visits*

Using opportunities availed to Isis-WICCE the organisation continues to collect data on women's human rights' abuses using many other fora. The data collected is mostly quantitative in nature. One of for a being the national and international missions/visits organised by influential groups at both national and international levels, as per the examples below.

- *Parliament of Uganda Mission to Northern Uganda*

In January 2004, Isis-WICCE was honoured to be part of the team of Uganda Parliamentarians who made a fact-finding mission to Northern Uganda. The visit, organised by a consortium of humanitarian and professional support organisation[12], took a team of 30 parliamentarians for a three days fact-finding missions, in Kitgum district, with the aim of assessing the magnitude of the destruction of the 18-year-old insurgency. This was after an outcry made by civil society, bilateral and UN agencies operating in Northern Uganda, such as, the international Rescue Committee (IRC), Oxfam, AVIS, World Food Programme, UNICEF among others. During the visit development stakeholders in the district were able to provide situation analysis to parliamentarians, as well as interview a survivors of the conflict on spot. Most of them highlighting the deteriorating health conditions of the survivors, due to poor feeding and poor sanitation conditions many people live in. The alarming rate of HIV/AIDS infection was also mentioned.[13]

This provided Isis-WICCE an opportunity to incorporate a gender perspective in the programme, and influenced the members of parliament to talk to women survivors too. This process was recorded on video and photographs were also taken. The data is vital for post conflict rehabilitation plan.

- *Women Initiative for Gender Justice*

Likewise, in November 2004, the Women Initiative for Gender Justice (WIGJ), a global women initiative, based at The Hague, whose objective is to monitor the International Criminal court (ICC) performance on the investigation of gender violation in conflict situations, made a fact-finding mission to Uganda by the court. This is in preparation for the on going investigation of crime against humanity to the people of northern Uganda. The mission was organised by Isis-WICCE in conjunction with the women groups in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum, Lira and Soroti[14], as well as women members of parliament of the said Districts. During the 10-day's mission in Northern Uganda, WIGJ and Isis-WICCE were able to document qualitative testimonies of individual interview, and recorded on audio and video equipment for future reference when prosecution begins.

---

[12] Development Associates in Conjunction with Office of Parliamentarian Professional Development, Community Resilience and Dialogue Project, AVIS and International Rescue Committee.

[13] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. A Report on the Mission to Kitgum Districe, 6th to 10th February 2003.

[14] People's Voince for Peace in Gulu; Women peace Initiatives in Kitgum; Lira Women Peace Initiative in Lira; and Teso Women Peace Association in Soriti in North Eastern Uganda.

Brief overview of the outcomes of the documentation

Sexual Violence

All forms of sexual violence (e.g rape, forced incest sexual slavery, forced impregnation vaginal mutilation, coercion)[15] have been inflicted to women in all the affected districts in Uganda. The findings revealed that the consequences of these violations to women's bodies are very disturbing. Data analysed showed manifestation of psychological trauma, vagina mutilation, unwanted children out of the numerous rapes, lack of access to health services, prolapsed uteruses, cancer to mention but a few. All these have gone unabated amidst well-documented and ratified international conventions and national laws, causing social pressure and stigmatization of the survivors. Below are some of the testimonies.

- *Rape*

"I was temporarily separated form my husband when we were fighting for the cause…we were attacked by the government soldiers…. We fled to the bush… six of them found me hiding…pointed a gun to me ordering me to lie down… All the six raped me for about three hours…. I got torn everywhere…developed backache…I could not control urine even faeces…. Before I recovered I was gang raped again at a military check point by 15 armed soldiers…my fellow male combatant was taken as a prisoner of war…".

- *Incest*

"They forced me to have sex with my daughter …I refused…. They ordered my son…. For the fear of a cocked gun he complied … I was then forced to have sex with a hole they had dug in the floor using a knife… They forced my private part in the hole several times…the skin was totally destroyed…. It was impossible to fight someone who is armed…. This was all done in front of my wife, son and the daughter…my wife went mad to date".

- *Forced Marriage*

" He took me way from my husband…. I had a breast-feeding baby…. When the war intensified, he took me to his home as his wife. On the way we went on robbing people of their property…. He forced me to carry the gun…. He showed me how to use the gun to attack our victims…. Reaching his home, his wife poured boiling water on me…. I was hospitalized in Lacor hospital for one year…after the liberation war I escaped and returned to my home area…"

- *Sexual Slavery*

"I was hiding under the bed with my father. I was about 14years… A soldier pulled me out and took me with him to the detach …he raped me for a full day while other girls he had abducted were watching…when he was transferred he sold me to another soldier for one thousand shillings…this was to happen to me three times"….

---

[15] CALLAMARD, Agnes and others. Investigating Women's Rights Violations in Armed Conflict. Rights and Democracy. Amnesty International Publication, 2001.p.117-133

Torture

It is also evident that the worrying factions have systematically used torture as a weapon of war. The table below provides quantitative data from the medical report by the Isis-WICCE medical research team.

The following table gives a breakdown of the type of torture experienced during the war in Gulu.

Variable	Total N=1018		Gender				Chi square P-Value
			Male (n=372)		Female (n=646)		
		%	Number	%	Number	%	
Experienced at least one torture event**	905	88.9	346	93.0	559	86.5	<0.00*
Physical torture							
Beating and kicking	445	43.7	216	58.1	229	35.4	<0.00*
Bayonet injuries	56	5.5	45	12.1	11	1.7	<0.00*
Forced to perform hard labour	173	17.0	104	28.0	69	10.7	<0.00*
Tying (Kandoya)	128	12.6	102	27.4	26	4.0	<0.00*
Deprivation of food, water and medicine	195	19.2	99	26.6	96	14.9	<0.00*
Gunshoot injuries	60	5.9	39	10.5	21	3.3	<0.00
Burning	22	2.2	11	3.0	11	1.7	<0.19
Sexual Torture	134	13.1	24	6.4	110	17.0	<0.00*
Completed rape	49	4.8	6	1.6	43	6.7	<0.00*
Attempted rape	50	4.9	9	2.4	41	6.3	0.01*
Forced marriage	35	3.4	9	2.4	26	4.0	0.18
Relative killed in war**	612	60.1	262	70.4	350	54.2	
Spouse	61	6.0	15	4.0	46	7.1	
Children	144	14.1	59	15.9	85	13.2	<0.00*
Others (aunt, uncle, grandparent)	407	40.0	188	50.5	219	33.9	
Psychological torture**							
Verbal threats	472	46.4	192	51.6	280	43.3	<0.01*
Interrogations	112	11.0	76	20.4	36	5.6	<0.00*
Military detention	226	22.2	112	30.1	114	17.6	<0.00*
Sleeping in bush/swamp	629	61.8	238	64.0	391	60.5	<0.28
Abduction	339	33.3	159	42.7	180	27.9	<0.00*
Destruction/ looting of family property/livestock	528	51.9	231	62.1	297	46.0	0.00*
Forced to fight in war	50	4.9	40	10.8	10	1.5	<0.00*
Forced to kill	25	2.5	19	5.1	6	0.9	<0.00*

Key: *Statistically significant associations

 **Some respondents reported more than one torture event

In Gulu the health experts also recorded the following disorders as a result of the experiences of violations committed to women and a few men interviewed.

Variable	Total (N=198)		Male (n=66)		Female (n=132)		Chi square P-value
Disorder**	No.	%	No	%	No	%	
Post traumatic stress Disorder (PTSD)	79	39.9	26	39.4	53	40.2	0.92
Depression	104	52.5	35	53.0	69	52.3	0.92
Alcohol abuse Disorder	36	18.2	17	25.8	19	14.4	0.05*
Generalised anxiety Disorder	9	4.5	4	6.1	5	3.8	0.47
Panic Disorder	120	60.6	36	54.5	84	63.6	0.22
Agoraphobia	80	40.4	17	25.8	63	47.7	<0.00*
Social phobia	40	20.2	18	27.3	22	16.7	0.08
Somatoform Disorder	144	72.7	44	66.7	100	75.8	0.18
Having suicidal thoughts	45	22.7	16	24.2	29	22.0	0.75

Table: **Psychiatric disorders as seen by the mental health team at Awer camp by Gender.**

Key: *statistically significant associations
       **some respondents had more than one psychological disorder.

Responding to the findings

- *Building Partnership in addressing the Consequences of the Armed Conflict*

It is inhuman to collect data from such desperate people and nothing positive in terms of addressing their plight is put in place. In most cases this has caused many survivors of war to refuse to share their experiences. This is why Isis-WICCE carries out an action-oriented documentation, which is followed by emergence short-term interventions, medium and long-term interventions.[16]

- *Medical redress*

There is a memorandum of understanding between Isis-WICCE and the medical team to carry out critical cases, particularly those that need surgery after collecting the data. Treatment and surgery mostly of gynaecological ailments such as VVF, prolapsed uterus, blockages of tubes and cancers were worked on. Isis-WICCE has successfully been able to raise some funds for these interventions for every districts surveyed. This is a moral conscience of the feminist approach to dealing with gender-based violence. It has also been a strategy to provide those responsible for the protection of the lives of women, with an alternative to redress with limited bureaucratic procedures. This approach has brought a lot of hope to the survivors of the violations and has encouraged many to come out and tell their stories. For the majority, without this

---

[16] Medical interventions are organised by Isis-WICCE in every area documented, and advocacy strategies are conducted to get basics for the poor of the poorest.

intervention they would have eventually died from the consequences of the violations inflicted on them.

- *Advocacy for basic needs*

Isis-WICCE has held a number of lobbying fora[17] to influence other stakeholders to give a hand. Many have responded to the calls.

- *Information dissemination*

Sharing of information is critical to end any form of violence. Isis-WICCE has used all forms of communication channels[18] to share its findings. This has enabled the organisation to contribute to raising awareness of the world about the war in north and northeastern Uganda.

Gaps/Challenges

The various international conventions and treaties for the protection of women have not been operationalised by many governments including Uganda, for example, CEDAW, Geneva Convention Article 3, the Convention Against Torture, ICCPR Article 8, ICESR Article 11, Protocol; to the Geneva Convention Article 76 (I). This has limited their effectiveness. For example the mechanisms to coordinate the available data for further analysis are weak.
•Marginalization of data collected by NGOs (as sub standard) and hence lack of its effective utilization.
• Data collection on violence against women is very expensive in terms of funding and time. Many donors shy away from it since they are mostly interested in tangible results.
•Acceptance and used of the findings by government in place.
• Women activists lack adequate skills in analysis of data by the

Recommendations.

•Invest in practicing documenters to build a vanguard of women researchers on violence against women.
•There is need to develop linkages between International researchers and local documenters for better systematic data collection.
•National research mechanisms must coordinate and integrate all data collected (by government and NGOs)
•Utilize the available data to make a difference to the plight of women
•Support Isis-WICCE to replicate its approach to data collection in other affected countries in Africa.

Conclusion

There are numerous specific efforts made by NGOs to avail data on various forms of violence against women and girls. Therefore, there is need to avail time and resources

---

[17] Press conferences with high level dignitaries such as government ministers, ambassadors, e.t.c
[18] Press releases, conferences, radio talk shows, video production, the internet, songs and drama

to process the collection, and integrate it into the national statistics if the world is to have a realistic and genuine percentages of data on violence against women. It is also crucial for states to critically re-consider their implementation strategies to end this scourge in our society.

References

1. A Lingering pain….Her Experiences; A Video Documentary. Isis-WICCE, 2002.

2. Arms to Fight and Arms to Protect: Women Speak Out about Armed Conflict. London: Panos, 1995.

3. LIEBLING, Helen. A gendered Analysis of the Experiences of Uganda Women War Survivors. A Thesis for PHD Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. University of Warwick, 2004.

4. LOMO, Zachary and HOVIL, Lucy. Behind the Violence; The War in Northern Uganda. Institute for Security Studies, March, 2004.

5. Medical Interventional Study of War Affected Teso Region, Uganda: An Isis-WICCE Research Report, 2002.

6. The National Strategic Framework of HIV/AIDS Activities in Uganda 2000/1 to 2005/6. Uganda Aids Commission, 2000.

7. The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1997.

8. The Short Term Intervention of the Psychological and Gynaecological Consequences of Armed Conflict in Uganda: Luweero District. An Isis-WICCE research report, 1999.

9. Women's Experiences of Armed Conflict in Uganda: Luweero District, 1980-1986. Part One. An Isis-WICCE Research Report, 1998.

10. Women's Experiences of Armed Conflict in Uganda: Gulu District 1986 – 1999. Part One. Uganda: Isis-WICCE, July 2001.

11. Women's Experiences of Armed conflict in Uganda: Luwero district 1980-1986; Part One and Two. Uganda: Isis-WICCE, 1989/1999.
12. Women's experiences of armed conflict in Uganda: The Teso region. 1987 – 1992 and   2002 Draft report. Uganda: Isis-WICCE, 2002.

13. The 1991 Population and Housing Census: Analytical report. Vol. 1, Demographic Characteristics.

14. Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action. U.K. Zed, 2003