An Assessment of the Risk of Mass Atrocities in Uganda

by Emily Sample

OCTOBER 2021
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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Atrocity Prevention Study Group (APSG) is an innovative forum for policymakers and practitioners to discuss both practical and theoretical aspects of atrocity prevention on an unclassified, non-partisan, non-attributable basis. The APSG connects stakeholders inside and outside of U.S. government with scholars and experts to share resources and knowledge on atrocity prevention and identify challenges, good practices, lessons learned, and policy options. It hosts a one-of-a-kind monthly forum to keep stakeholders up-to-date with the latest atrocity prevention scholarship, deepen understanding of potential atrocity situations, and offer resources for decision-making.

ABOUT THE STIMSON CENTER

The Stimson Center promotes international security, shared prosperity & justice through applied research and independent analysis, deep engagement, and policy innovation.

For three decades, Stimson has been a leading voice on urgent global issues. Founded in the twilight years of the Cold War, the Stimson Center pioneered practical new steps toward stability and security in an uncertain world. Today, as changes in power and technology usher in a challenging new era, Stimson is at the forefront: Engaging new voices, generating innovative ideas and analysis, and building solutions to promote international security, prosperity, and justice.

**ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CSO   Civil Society Organization  
INGO  International Non-governmental Organization  
NRM   National Resistance Movement (political party currently in power)  
NUP   National Unity Platform (opposition political party)  
R2P   Responsibility to Protect Doctrine  
UN    United Nations  
UPDF  Uganda People’s Defense Force  

**KEY DEFINITIONS**

**Conflict drivers**: key people, institutions, or forces that play a central role in mobilizing people to respond violently to the root causes of conflict and shared perceptions of grievances relating to human security.¹

**Local**: synonymous with domestic or subnational and refers to activities or institutions that occupy a specific geographic [in this case, the West Nile region] or cultural space within the conflict-affected country.²

**Peacebuilding**: a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society to address the root causes of violence before, during, and after violent conflict. While peacebuilding can involve the direct work of mitigating conflict, it can also refer to development, humanitarian assistance, governance, security, justice, and other sectors that may not use the term “peacebuilding” to self-describe.³

**Resilience**: how effectively groups absorb the “shock and disturbance” of upheavals, such as economic and political crises, or their capacity to withstand the pressures of combined risk factors.⁴

**Structural violence**: the disabilities, disparities, and even deaths that result from systems, institutions, or policies that foster economic, social, political, educational, and other inequalities between groups.⁵

**Structural mass atrocity prevention**: “actions that seek to address the root causes of potential violent conflict,” as opposed to “direct (or ‘operational’) prevention [which] entails measures to prevent the escalation of tensions into violence.”⁶
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uganda continually places within the top 30 countries worldwide at risk of a mass atrocity event, classifying it as of medium risk. In the past year, Uganda has gone through a presidential election where rule of law, extrajudicial arrests, and killings, torture, and wrongful imprisonment have all been part of the campaign and election cycle. Despite this risk level, it has yet to be prioritized for atrocity prevention funding by U.S. and international governing bodies, largely because of the immediate needs for intervention in other countries. This report steps into this gap, seeking to inform mass atrocity prevention practitioners, U.S. desk and in-country foreign policy officers, and those with an interest in a peaceful Uganda. Early warning and early response programs that focus on structural atrocity prevention are more efficient and more cost-effective than post-atrocity interventions, making a compelling case for the prioritization of such activities at the international level. With the goal of informing these efforts, this report investigates community-level understandings of peace and conflict indicators in West Nile, Uganda.

The West Nile region contains many of the potential conflict triggers that Uganda as a whole and many similar medium-risk countries face: porous borders; refugee communities; food, water, and energy resource pressures; poverty; and a history of mass atrocities. In examining how the people of West Nile understand and respond to these pressures, it is possible to build more effective interventions and peacebuilding methods that are developed and owned at local and national levels. The focus of this study is trifold: (1) to illustrate perceptions of current and future security in Uganda through a specific focus on conditions in the West Nile region, (2) to provide insights into potential conflict triggers, and (3) to investigate how best to build up Uganda’s resilience and atrocity prevention capacity.

Through a series of individual interviews and focus group discussions with grassroots peacebuilding activists, local government officials, and community leaders in the West Nile region of Uganda, this report finds that the demarcation between potential conflict triggers and peace capacity building opportunities is highly dependent on community response. Many of the same issues that are frequently noted as conflict triggers can also be avenues for atrocity prevention. Through financial, educational, and training investment in structural mass atrocity prevention and peacebuilding programs with governmental or INGO support, potential threat multipliers can be transformed into positive, sustainable sources of resilience. For example, warnings about high unemployment can instead be understood as a ready workforce to build and staff much-needed schools. High numbers of refugees can be utilized to dig irrigation and plant sustainable farms in partnership with land-owning locals. Fears over hate speech on social media can be countered with community-building educational campaigns on violence de-escalation and free speech.

The findings of this report encourage the West Nile community, Ugandan national and district government bodies, the U.S. government, and UN and international NGOs to involve established local actors in holistic atrocity prevention strategies and to design early warning and early response atrocity prevention efforts with grassroots support. Without efforts to increase local agency and support grassroots efforts, top-down peacebuilding approaches will continue to require long-term international intervention. Supporting local sources of resilience is the key to successful structural atrocity prevention, and medium-risk countries like Uganda have the capacity and need for immediate, efficient peacebuilding.
INTRODUCTION

Uganda has experienced mass atrocities in the recent past by both domestic and foreign perpetrators, with the risk of new atrocities on the rise. As risk factors increase, Ugandans continue to fear the potential of further violence. Of particular concern is that Uganda has gone through a presidential election in the past year where rule of law, extrajudicial arrests and killings, torture, and wrongful imprisonment have all featured in the campaign and election cycle. Uganda ranks 25th out of 162 countries on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Early Warning list of countries at potential risk of mass atrocity. And in an analysis of a broad spectrum of conflict prevention lists, Uganda consistently places within the top 30 countries worldwide at risk of a mass atrocity event, classifying it as medium risk.

The focus of this study is trifold: (1) to illustrate perceptions of current and future security in Uganda through a specific focus on conditions in the West Nile region; (2) to provide insights into potential conflict triggers; and (3) to investigate how best to build up Uganda’s resilience and atrocity prevention capacity. The analysis focuses on the West Nile region as both a distinct locale for potential violence and an example of how similar factors across the country could lead to violence more broadly. This case study focuses on West Nile because it exhibits many of the potential conflict triggers that Uganda as a whole and other similar medium-risk countries face, including porous borders; refugee communities; food, water, and energy resource pressures; poverty; and a history of mass atrocities. In examining how the people of West Nile understand and respond to these pressures, it is possible to build more effective intervention and peacebuilding methods locally and nationally.

The limited research funding that is allocated to atrocity prevention, both globally and in the U.S., tends to be prioritized toward urgent, ongoing atrocity crises. This creates a knowledge gap in contexts like Uganda where cost-effective, efficient atrocity prevention policies could help avoid the next humanitarian disaster. To fill this gap in current knowledge and practice, the current study assesses the risk of mass atrocities in Uganda by analyzing local, national, and regional conflict dynamics. To that end, the study focuses on identifying potential conflict triggers and the corresponding options for preventive policy action available to stakeholders. It has been carried out with the aim of developing and utilizing local contexts to investigate key indicators of potential mass atrocities. Our aim has been to explore a proof-of-concept research approach that might be replicated in medium-risk countries elsewhere.
This report examines the conflict dynamics in Uganda’s West Nile region by homing in on long- and short-term mass atrocity triggers within its complex systems and by investigating how they manifest in various contexts and how they could be mitigated by an informed intervention policy. The research is guided by the continuing need for effective mass atrocity prevention, with the acknowledgment that medium-risk countries like Uganda have a variety of options for building peace and avoiding future atrocities. The research questions that guide this report are as follows:

• What do local stakeholders in West Nile consider indicators of potential future violence, and are they able to effectively communicate the presence of these indicators to local, regional, national, and international authorities?
• How do Ugandans frame and understand national-level conflict drivers, and do these match conflict drivers being experienced in West Nile?
• What tangible violence reduction and atrocity prevention methods are currently in use, and do local stakeholders consider them effective?

This study integrates data from scholars, nongovernmental organizations, governments, and local peacebuilding practitioners to cover a breadth of key conflict drivers. In doing so, it draws upon original field research conducted in West Nile from August through November 2020. The members of the field research team in Uganda were recruited based on their prior experience with the subject matter and their reputations as local peacebuilders. The research included 47 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups with a total of 22 local stakeholders, as well as 11 semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts. Those engaged in West Nile include leaders from civil society organizations, district-level local government officials—including police, education, water, land, planning, and community-based service providers—as well as cultural and religious leaders. By situating this analysis of conflict indicators at the community level, the report integrates peacebuilding and resiliency recommendations from both the bottom up and top down.

The research focused on communities in the districts of Adjumani, Moyo, Yumbe, Nebbi, and Arua, including the Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement, in West Nile. Interviews were later conducted with local community members in conflict areas, including members of the Refugee Welfare Council (RCW1) and host community Local Council One (LC1) near the Rhino refugee settlement. Interviewees were asked about their community needs, including who responds to these needs and why; their perceptions of violence, and who was perpetrating it; perceptions of security and vulnerability; the strength and effectiveness of local peace and justice methods; and their perceptions of potential conflict in their community. Because the sampled individuals were specifically chosen because of their roles in local conflict prevention by the field team, the resulting data cannot be considered generalizable. The report highlights the perspectives of local West Nile actors and their perceptions of potential local, regional, and national conflict triggers. Larger numerical samples and broader geographic efforts might reveal different regional perspectives.
A key goal of this research is to help shift the atrocity prevention blueprint from only responding to imminent threats, to supporting a variety of policy initiatives that can be effective tools for early warning and early response to violence and atrocity. Recent studies suggest that structural atrocity prevention is more effective and efficient than post-conflict intervention. To date, very little work has focused on how domestic and international institutions could best carry out this type of work. This report steps into this gap, seeking to inform mass atrocity prevention practitioners, U.S. desk and in-country foreign policy officers, and those with an interest in a peaceful Uganda.
ONGOING RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTITIONER DISCUSSIONS

The USAID Field Guide: Helping Prevent Mass Atrocities points to four key methods of mitigating risk: “(1) preventing the outbreak of armed conflict outbreak, (2) promoting human rights, rule of law, and democratic governance, (3) strengthening civil society, and (4) building capacity and legitimacy of weak states.” Similarly, the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework and the USAID Conflict Assessment Framework help users identify windows of risk or opportunity when a context is ripe for a triggering event or for strategic intervention. Taking these tools for assessment and prevention into account, this report examines how influential factors manifest and how they can be more readily recognized on the ground.

Common risk factors for atrocities include large-scale instability, prior armed conflict, transformative or exclusionary ideology, and discrimination or violence against a particular group. Mass atrocity prevention expert Scott Straus finds that “the type of instability most consistently associated with genocide and mass atrocity is armed conflict, followed by an ‘adverse regime change,’ such as a coup or revolution.” While these risk factors may make a country more likely to experience a mass atrocity event, there are also a variety of atrocity triggers that can act as a “spark” for a sharp escalation in violence or signal a turning point in a crisis. These triggers include high-level assassinations, coups or attempted coups, change in conflict dynamics, crackdowns on protests, and symbolically significant attacks against individuals or physical sites.

There are two caveats to this analysis of “well-known” risks and triggers. First, as Straus elaborates, current research focuses on explaining and forecasting mass killings. Other forms of mass atrocity, such as systematic violence against civilian populations, remain under-investigated. Second, most current scholarship looks at violence perpetrated by governments, leaving unexamined many atrocities committed by non-state actors, such as by insurgent organizations like the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda.

Structural Prevention Methods

This study builds on the works of both Alex Bellamy and Stephen McLoughlin in understanding concepts of structural mass atrocity prevention. The terms “mass atrocity prevention,” “peacebuilding,” and “building resilience” are used throughout this report to indicate types of programming within the sphere of conflict mitigation. Though not interchangeable, these three terms are used to refer to different, but related, aspects of structural mass atrocity prevention. Mass violence is frequently the result of multifaceted, complicated patterns of human behavioral responses to pressures, norms, and interlinking systems. Genocide and mass atrocity prevention experts have been working to broaden their understanding of potential conflict triggers to take these complexities into account. The physical violence we often see manifested in mass atrocity events is embedded within broader systems of structural violence, including discriminatory legal practices and patriarchal gender roles. These events, however, are not always predictable, as many social processes parallel the path to mass violence. Recognizing the presence of certain potential triggers, as discussed above, can be opportunities for early intervention.

In addition to McLoughlin’s views, this report has been written with Alex Bellamy’s concept of structural atrocity prevention in mind. Bellamy argues that “by changing the social and political contexts to make them less permissive of atrocities, we can change individual decisions about whether to perpetrate these crimes.” The findings outlined in this report provide an illustration of Bellamy’s point from the vantage point of the local level in the West Nile region.
Many experts view mass atrocities and genocide prevention as a core part of the U.S. national security agenda, resulting from the U.S. Presidential Study Directive 10 enacted in 2011. And though considerable attention has been devoted to discussion of how to select at-risk countries for early prevention efforts, both government and non-government analysts continue to struggle with how to broaden their focus from countries whose needs appear more immediate. To resolve this dilemma, the funding and policy goals must shift to support violence- and atrocity-mitigation in a way that addresses both immediate and structural needs. As McLoughlin argues, “Premising [mass atrocity] prevention solely on identifying risk fails to explain why some at-risk countries experience mass atrocities, yet others do not.”

Countries experiencing immediate and acute human rights emergencies continue to be the focus of expert recommendations on mass atrocity prevention, specifically within the context of U.S. and UN intervention. This, however, disregards the first principle of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, which stresses that each individual state bears primary responsibility for protecting its population against the threat of mass violence. If the discussion moves immediately to intervention models, the international community has already failed the first two pillars of the R2P mass atrocity prevention model, which states, in part: “1. Every state has the Responsibility to Protect its populations from four mass atrocity crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. 2. The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual states in meeting that responsibility.”

Grassroots peace practitioners in West Nile stressed the need for the international community writ large to turn some of this attention instead to preventing mass atrocities, by helping Ugandans build resilience and conflict prevention infrastructures to prevent the scenarios in which mass atrocities become possible.

Civil Society

A 2020 report published by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide notes that despite civil society organizations’ “ubiquitous” role in atrocity, there are few specific recommendations as to how these organizations could best be supported in atrocity prevention work. Stephen Pomper assesses that the Genocide Prevention Task Force report “strongly emphasizes making the US government better at upstream prevention . . . [but] accepts that upstream work will not always be sufficient.” Many policymakers and experts agree that the atrocity prevention “toolbox” can and should be more inclusive of longer-term measures, whether led by INGOs and donor-funded projects, or through development programming led by governmental initiatives. This report contributes to the growing trend toward greater contextualization of the potential for mass atrocities through analysis of regional- and village-level conflict dynamics.
BACKGROUND: FRAMING THE CASE OF UGANDA

Uganda has experienced very few periods of positive peace, whether from the time of its early tribal kingdoms, its colonization and Christianization by the United Kingdom, its time under “divide and rule” government, or the dictatorship of Idi Amin Dada, to its current status under Yoweri Museveni and the recent uprising of Joseph Kony and the Lord’s Resistance Army in Northern Uganda. As with most post-colonial states, Uganda suffers from broad-reaching inequality, as well as ethnic and religious discrimination. The legacy of this constructed and institutionalized ethnic division has played out in the decades since Uganda’s independence from the United Kingdom in 1962 against a background of distrust, war, and rebellion. Uganda is made up of 56 ethnic groups who speak as many languages or dialects. Studies focused on ethnic, religious, and linguistic fractionalization regularly list Uganda as one of the world’s most heterogenous countries.

Uganda’s status as a country of medium-level risk is due in part to this heterogeneity, but it is far from the only contributing factor. In 2020, Uganda received an averaged ranking of the 26th most at-risk country in a survey of 19 lists relating to freedom, conflict, and early warning. These rankings provide essential insight into the known structural factors, drivers, and potential triggers of mass atrocities and their variable potential in Uganda. When viewed together, these lists illustrate that in Uganda weak governance is paired with a weak economy, high unemployment, inconsistent civil and human rights protection, and spiraling environmental degradation. These lists outline the types of questions and analysis needed to understand potential conflict triggers on the ground in the West Nile region.

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Early Warning list highlights Uganda’s high ethnic fractionalization, as well as its anocratic government and history of mass atrocities. The Peoples under Threat index, which identifies populations within countries who are at risk of systemic oppression and mass atrocity, highlights the potential for violence in the Acholi, Karamojong, Basongora, and Batwa regions, as well as the recent movement for independence in the Rwenzururu region. The indicators illustrate a Uganda where certain ethnic and socio-economic groups lack human security. This is key data in analyzing how different regions fare differently under both past and current governments and points to potential “hot spots” for future atrocities.

Gendered analysis is an essential component in peacebuilding, atrocity, and conflict prevention conversations. The UN Development Program Gender Inequality Index measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development: reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. In this ranking, Uganda is listed 162nd out of 189 countries, where 1st represents the most equal. Similarly, the Women’s Peace and Security Index, which measures women’s inclusion, justice, and security, ranked Uganda 100th most inclusive of 153 countries. It is worth noting that several of these lists utilize infant and maternal mortality as an indicator of potential conflict because it reveals a country with unequal access to healthcare, incomplete transportation infrastructure, and gendered economic and educational disparities.
This study was undertaken in part during the run-up to the 2021 presidential election. Thirty-five years after Yoweri Museveni took power, he and the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party have continued the legacy of Ugandan leaders domineering politics through patronage networks and financial incentives. In the eyes of some international institutions and foreign governments, Museveni's rule has brought stability and predictability to a previously volatile region. Others view his administration’s clampdown on political opposition, civil society organizations, social media, and public assembly as a hallmark of authoritarianism.

### Watch List Rankings

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Countries ranked by watch lists focused on early warning for mass atrocities and human rights abuses. Uganda’s placement in different watch lists highlighted in yellow. Credit: Benjamin A. Valentino, 2020

Other indices speak to the state of human rights, rule of law, and corruption in Uganda. For instance, the Fragile States Index ranks Uganda 24th most fragile of 178 countries, based on human and civil rights factors, and the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index places Uganda 117th of 128 countries, where 1st is the highest ranking for maintaining rule of law. Likewise, the Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Uganda the 142nd of 180 countries, in which 1st is the least corrupt. These rankings have been of particular importance this past year as Uganda has gone through a presidential election where rule of law, extrajudicial arrests and killings, torture, and wrongful imprisonment have all been part of the campaign and election cycle. Massive corruption was noted by interviewees as contributing to long-term insecurity, both at a small scale—for example, having to pay ambulance drivers to take someone to the hospital—and at a large scale—such as COVID-19 relief funding being rerouted to campaign funds.

### Presidential election, COVID-19, and an unpredictable future

This study was undertaken in part during the run-up to the 2021 presidential election. Thirty-five years after Yoweri Museveni took power, he and the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party have continued the legacy of Ugandan leaders domineering politics through patronage networks and financial incentives. In the eyes of some international institutions and foreign governments, Museveni’s rule has brought stability and predictability to a previously volatile region. Others view his administration’s clampdown on political opposition, civil society organizations, social media, and public assembly as a hallmark of authoritarianism.
National elections are well noted as potential conflict and mass atrocity triggers. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic and political shutdown made the build-up to this election even more unstable and divisive than predicted. Heightened in part because of election season, ethnic-, religious-, and regionally focused hate speech circulated through radio programming, as well as through popular communication platforms like WhatsApp and YouTube. The current administration used the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic to ban large group gatherings and make travel more difficult, adding to the restrictions already in place under the Public Order Management Act. INGOs and CSOs who would otherwise be participating in pre- and post-election monitoring are unable to travel to and throughout Uganda. The Ugandan government allowed neither the United States nor the European Union to monitor the election. Throughout his campaign, opposition challenger Robert Kyagulanyi, known as Bobi Wine, and other National Unity Platform (NUP) leaders were repeatedly arrested on COVID-19 related charges, including “knowing or having reason to believe [their actions were] likely to spread infection or disease dangerous to life.” Kyagulanyi’s arrest in November 2020 sparked nationwide protests that the UPDF and police forces forcefully put down, resulting in the deaths of almost 40 people— with hundreds more injured and arrested. Continued alleged arrests, torture, and unlawful imprisonment of NUP members and supporters have since clouded election results. As both COVID-19 and political uncertainty linger, the increased risk of violence brought by the election season also continues.

West Nile: Local History & Context
West Nile is a sub-region of northern Uganda that borders both the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. The West Nile region boasts a population of just under three million people, of whom approximately 80 percent live in rural areas. The ethnic majority are the Lugbara people. Despite its relatively small population, the West Nile region is host to six distinct languages found across eight districts. West Nile may be best known as the birthplace of the despotic dictator Idi Amin, who overthrew President Milton Obote in 1971 and ruled until his own overthrow in 1979.

The case of Amin is of specific interest here not just because of his perpetration of mass violence, but because of the structural factors that led to Amin’s rise and that have lingered well after the end of his regime. These factors include long-term regional poverty, highly porous borders, and the ethnic Lugbara’s continued oppression following the colonial period. As Mark Leopold wrote, “The strange [violent] fantasies about Amin cultivated by both international and Ugandan commentators were based on pre-existing ideas about his home district, and grew to determine how the inhabitants of the area were seen by other Ugandans.” From the early colonial period, the British deemed the so-called Nubis or Nubians to be “the best material for soldiery in Africa.”

“In the eyes of some international institutions and foreign governments, Museveni’s rule has brought stability and predictability to a previously volatile region. Others view his administration’s clampdown on political opposition, civil society organizations, social media, and public assembly as a hallmark of authoritarianism.”
the West Nile region remained underdeveloped in relation to the Buganda region to the south and the Acholi region to its east, even under Idi Amin. It was decimated in the early 1980s by military forces seeking retribution after the Amin regime, forcing the population to flee over the border to Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) and Sudan (now South Sudan). While many of the refugees were able to return to the region after President Museveni took power in 1986, intermittent violence continued, prolonging deep-seated poverty, infrastructural underdevelopment, and the region’s reputation for violence. During this time, the Lord’s Resistance Army subjected the northern region of Uganda to a decades-long guerilla war that infamously used kidnapped children as soldiers and “wives.” Simultaneously, the Museveni government forced much of the Acholi population into camps for internally displaced persons, which were poorly maintained, were heavily reliant on international aid, and served as a space of targeted violence by government forces and the UPDF. The resulting economic, infrastructural, physical, and emotional trauma continues to overshadow the region and stunt its development. In the past five years, these same permeable borders allowed a record number of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan to flow into West Nile, which hosts over half of Uganda’s 1.4 million refugees.

In Northern Uganda, the years of conflict have uprooted traditional masculine roles. As a result, Robert Esuruku argues,

The responsibility to provide for the family has shifted to women while the idle and severely frustrated men have resorted to alcoholism. Many men upset by the loss of their traditional roles as providers resorted to domestic violence, suicide, abandonment and some of them ended up in acute mental illness...both Government of Uganda and Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) seem to regard peaceful resolution to the armed conflict unmanly. Acknowledgement, apology, forgiveness and restitution are regarded to be feminine because “real men” are believed to resolve their differences in the battlefield.
This suggests that men in the community have felt emasculated as they have lost their traditional roles as providers, resorting to violence to assert their masculinity. Furthermore, concepts of traditional masculinity have guided the country's leaders to resolve their differences through violence. This gendering of reconciliation leaves men without avenues for meaningful justice or reparation, stagnating their transition into peacetime. Additionally, the lack of governmental and society support in the post-conflict reconstruction period has left many men in the region without economic prospects, while all the cultural pressures remain regarding maintaining a career and supporting a family. Issues of frustration and unemployment are further augmented by a large “youth bubble.” The approximately 32 million Ugandans between the ages of 15 and 35 constitute 78 percent of the total population. Of these, 1.2 million are considered idle or unemployed, and the number is rising.58

Lack of access to education and opportunity is an issue in West Nile specifically, as there are fewer schools in Northern and rural parts of Uganda and almost no options for high education. As a result, culturally sensitive understandings of how gender and age play into the unfinished disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process, transitional justice, and continuing violence (both domestic and identity-based) are essential to peacebuilding and structural atrocity prevention in the region.

Kampala’s high rise buildings loom over a neighborhood just outside the city. Credit: Emily Sample
FINDINGS: CONFLICT TRIGGERS AND SOURCES OF RESILIENCE

The findings of this report reflect a need—and a desire—for greater early warning and early response methods at the grassroots level. The key finding expressed by grassroots peacebuilding activists, local government officials, and community leaders is that conflict triggers and peace capacity building opportunities identified by those outside of West Nile did not match their realities. Both interviewees and focus group discussions noted the critical disconnect between the stated goals of international atrocity prevention programs and how those programs are ultimately executed on the ground. The respondents repeatedly expressed the need for their meaningful inclusion and participation in future aid programming, as well as a need for reframing how local conflict drivers are addressed by such initiatives.

In general, the framing of conflict triggers and sources of resilience is best viewed as a spectrum. The issues that could intensify or create conflict are frequently the same issues that can be utilized as peacebuilding and atrocity prevention opportunities. National- and local-level sources of resilience are key influences in whether a community or identity-group responds to the combined pressures of the risk factors with violence.

As illustrated in the following table, the main drivers of conflict noted by respondents in West Nile predominantly mirror indicators noted in the current literature on mass atrocity prevention, as do many of the local sources of resilience. What also emerged from the respondents was a list of conflict drivers that could instead be utilized as an opportunity for peacebuilding. The key issues noted by respondents can be broadly categorized into three pillars: issues that drive conflict, issues that can drive either conflict or peacebuilding, and sources of resilience. These columns reflect what and how the West Nile respondents understand the issues facing Uganda as a whole, as well as the issues and resilience factors specifically represented in the West Nile region.

The issues identified in the triggers/opportunities column reflect events that can exacerbate the risk of atrocities if left unaddressed or, alternatively, mitigate the risk of atrocities if appropriate resources are invested in support of community approaches. For example, high unemployment was noted repeatedly by respondents and is a well-known risk factor for mass atrocity. Unemployment can be both the cause and result of an abundance of related issues, including low or no education access, poverty, drug abuse and alcoholism, domestic violence, urbanization, and local refugee and flows of internally displaced persons. Under traditional atrocity prevention thought, these issues would fall squarely in the “risk” camp, where they would be evaluated for their potential role in preparing the groundwork for a triggering incident. By seeking instead to undertake a lens of structural atrocity prevention, it may be possible to reframe “high unemployment” as a peacebuilding and atrocity prevention opportunity: there is a ready workforce that can be educated, trained, and deployed locally. This workforce could be utilized for anything from replanting deforested areas to building and implementing sustainable permaculture agriculture.

The issue of unemployment also goes hand in hand with lack of access to education. One focus group respondent in West Nile noted that, “Even since colonial times, the education system does not promote livelihood and our sufficiency.” Without formal education, students in West Nile are caught in the loop of un- and under-employment, which makes them more susceptible to frustration and manipulation, as well as less likely to be able to critically investigate misinformation. Several focus group respondents noted that education was not accessible as a result of the dual issues of “favoritism and poverty” in their area. This lack of access to education provides a key peacebuilding opportunity in the literal building and staffing of new public schools. As is well researched in the conflict prevention and peacebuilding literature, education is a key component of the long-term reduction in structural violence. There is thus major peacebuilding potential in establishing locally led, equitable education access.
This diagram illustrates the spectrum of issues affecting Uganda as presented by local respondents and verified by West Nile community stakeholders. Points marked with an asterisk were noted by respondents as being key issues in the West Nile region.
Social media and internet access were also noted as tools that could be used either to trigger or de-escalate potential conflict. Hate speech is notoriously hard to monitor, especially with highly diverse dialects and culturally specific euphemisms like those found in the West Nile region. Respondents said that increased access to large communication platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube have led to a surge in hate-based rhetoric and rumors. Simultaneously, though, grassroots activists are utilizing these same networks to document and share human rights violations and advocate for free speech. If these formal and informal communication networks can be adopted for peacebuilding efforts, they can be used to shut down false information and discourage hate speech.

Several respondents also stressed the dereliction of justice and justice systems at the community level, ranging from an inability to prosecute previous atrocities to a failure to intervene in disputes between neighbors or villages before they escalate. Among their sources of resilience, though, the respondents mentioned several possible avenues available for justice, including through local elders, local traditional courts, and formal courts. Respondents noted, however, that none of these entities for recourse receive the resources they need to be regularly relied upon. CSOs and district governments have worked to fill the judicial vacuum where possible and believe that efforts to expand women’s access to justice, for example, offer an actionable opportunity for peacebuilding and atrocity prevention.

While national-level truth and reconciliation trials may be far off, village-, district-, and regional-level transitional justice methods do offer a potential alternative. In interviews, community members explained the current methods of justice available in their communities, whether through police and the courts, or through traditional council courts, and how they would like to see these methods supported, expanded, and made more transparent. Even while acknowledging that national-level judicial reform is a long-term goal, their overarching response was that the community as a whole would be more peaceful and secure if a trusted judiciary process were available. Building the capacity of the judicial system is thus a key peacebuilding and atrocity prevention opportunity. It would not only support the community’s needs but also build trust in the peacebuilding process by illustrating that the community is being heard and respected by international development and conflict prevention practitioners operating locally, as well as the Ugandan government.

The need for justice mechanisms is especially relevant given the West Nile region’s high number of refugees, and the recent violence between host and refugee communities in the Rhino camp refugee settlement that left multiple refugees dead in September 2020. While this violence appears to be an isolated incident, the environment that allowed a small altercation to escalate in a fatal manner is unchanged.

Lack of access to justice was also cited as a significant factor in the pervasive problem of domestic and gender-based violence. In one focus group, a male respondent commented, “In Lugbara, we do not own land, we hold it in trust. Women are guardians of the land of the community.” A woman responded, “But men assume that whatever women own belongs to them.” Nearly all our respondents cited women’s rights and women’s safety as significant issues. When asked for warning signs of violence in their community, one focus group noted three indicators focused on gender-based structural violence: domestic violence, unintended pregnancies, and early marriages.

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Even while acknowledging that national-level judicial reform is a long-term goal, their overarching response was that the community as a whole would be more peaceful and secure if a trusted judiciary process were available. Building the capacity of the judicial system is thus a key peacebuilding and atrocity prevention opportunity. It would not only support the community’s needs but also build trust in the peacebuilding process by illustrating that the community is being heard and respected by international development and conflict prevention practitioners operating locally, as well as the Ugandan government.
SCENARIOS

Based on the history of conflict in Uganda, and the national conflict dynamics and triggers noted by the interview respondents, three scenarios emerged as illustrative for understanding the political and regional context. These scenarios outline possible future responses, over the next one to five years, to known conflict triggers that could escalate up to an atrocity event. The scenarios are meant to illustrate the conflict potential for Uganda as a whole. They are not meant to offer concrete predictions or recommendations about the future; rather, they can be understood as thought experiments that look at how conditions could develop to increase the risk of mass atrocity and/or decrease the sources of resilience.

Scenario 1: Mass Protests

In the short term, a potential trigger for mass conflict in Uganda could be a large-scale civilian or military response to the ongoing political unrest around the 2021 presidential elections. If the public still has questions about the legitimacy of the election results, or if one or more of the presidential candidates were to be seriously harmed or murdered, there is a strong possibility that their supporters would protest publicly and face a militarized response from the NRM government. Protests similar to those seen in November 2020 in response to Bobi Wine’s arrest could spontaneously flash all over the country.

Fear of mass protests compelled President Museveni to flex his power during the presidential election in January 2021 when he turned off all internet access to the entire country for five days. While the internet shutdown drew international criticism, as well as an attack from Internet-Freedom Fighters Anonymous, the move was ultimately successful in preventing civilians from coordinating information sharing or protests. It would not be surprising to see Museveni utilize this power again in the face of large-scale protests.

Additionally, protests and personal travel are still intermittently banned as a result of continuing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and lockdowns. This has created space for a legitimized police or military response to any public assembly or travel without the requirement of prior state permission. These restrictions are difficult for the international community to criticize and outside of the debates on the Public Order Management Act. If these restrictions continue, there is potential for the legalized dispersion of all protesters and subsequent mass arrests.

Scenario 1: Recommendations for Atrocity Prevention

For the U.S. Government

- Establish standing relationships with recognized scholars and CSOs focused on local atrocity prevention—e.g., Atrocities Watch Africa, Refugee Law Project, African Youth Initiative Network, Human Rights Network Uganda, Makerere University, Mbarara University.
- Utilize formal and informal communication networks to decrease misinformation and identify hate speech with localized cultural nuance.
- Support and increase UN and African Union capacity for peacebuilding and peacekeeping measures in Uganda through dedicated staff, increased funding, and leadership training.

For Ugandan National and District Government Bodies

- Reduce militarized response to current pandemic.
- Increase nonpartisan implementation of existing laws and protections, especially in refugee/host community relations.
- Increase and guarantee internet access, including social media access.
- Decrease barriers to international partnership of CSOs, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders working to build and maintain peace.
For the West Nile Community

- Increase number of people providing social services (police, healthcare workers, etc.) by recruiting additional staff, expanding infrastructure, and allocating further funding.
- Build international partnership of CSOs, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders to build and maintain peace.

Scenario 2: Refugee Flows and Conflict in the Region

Uganda is in a neighborhood of countries that has experienced long-standing insecurity. The relationship between these countries is thus quite fluid. Ongoing armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo has prompted long-term refugee inflows to Uganda. In addition, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda are all alleged to be supporting insurgent groups in the North and South Kivu regions of the DR Congo. Escalating tensions with the DR Congo government—and between each other—could result in a messy proxy war. Friction between Kigali and Kampala has risen episodically and continues to influence their relationship with the DR Congo. Simultaneously, South Sudan is Uganda’s youngest neighbor and has only recently pulled itself back from the brink of civil war.

Citizens of both South Sudan and the DR Congo continue to cross the border into Uganda in large numbers. Should either of these countries experience a major flare-up in violence, massive refugee flows could destabilize the already delicate balance between refugee and host communities, especially in West Nile. Refugee settlements are already facing capacity issues, with nearly 1.5 million refugees currently living in Uganda, over 700,000 of whom are settled in West Nile. Neither the Ugandan government nor the international community is consistently providing the resources and care refugees and host communities have been promised.

As an additional complication, Uganda has reopened its international borders following the closure prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Should an influx of refugees arrive in Uganda while the pandemic is still ongoing and most people remain unvaccinated, there could be a massive wave of infections in Ugandan host communities and refugee settlements, especially in parts of West Nile where refugees make up almost 50 percent of the population. This would put further strain on the region and humanitarian aid groups’ resources. Additionally, it could create conditions ripe for sowing fear, resentment, and prejudice against the refugee groups, possibly leading to violent clashes or outright massacres.

Scenario 2: Recommendations for Atrocity Prevention

For the U.S. Government

- Identify key community stakeholders and opportunities for supporting grassroots peacebuilding institutions.
- Utilize formal and informal communication networks to decrease misinformation and identify hate speech with localized cultural nuance.
- Engage in co-design and co-implementation of goals and strategies with local communities, utilizing resources to support their expertise.
- Create an appointed senior official position to coordinate responses to atrocity crimes and establish early warning and early response prevention programming, including hate speech monitoring in local languages.
For Ugandan National and District Government Bodies
- Enact environmental protections of natural resources (e.g., water, biomass) in conjunction with sustainable use policies.
- Increase nonpartisan implementation of existing laws and protections, especially in refugee/host community relations.
- Increase the capacity of police and justice systems (local council courts, magistrate courts, etc.) by recruiting additional staff, expanding infrastructure, and allocating further funding.
- Strengthen the capacity of district leaders and courts that handle local disputes, through increased staffing and training.

For the West Nile Community
- Increase fair access to and sustainable use of firewood.
- Convene local community accountability platforms to hold the government duty bearers accountable, provide responses to community issues, and offer dispute resolution.
- Support communities hosting refugee settlements through employment opportunities, land grants, and sensitivity trainings.
- Distribute resources fairly between refugees and host communities.
- Strengthen the capacity of local leaders and courts to handle local disputes through increased staffing and training.
- Increase local engagement with and access to formal and informal justice methods.

Scenario 3: Sudden Political Transition
In a maneuver common to authoritarian regimes, President Museveni has avoided naming a clear second-in-command in order to maintain control on his consolidated power, often shifting favor among his high-level leadership, including his son. Although Museveni has publicly touted his health and stamina, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, a sudden need to name his successor resulting from a health crisis could cause intense conflict within the NRM-controlled government. The lack of clear succession would generate competition and possible fracturing within the regime. In the face of weak or no leadership, the traditional kingdoms might seek to reassert their political power, especially in the Buganda and Rwenzururu regions. It has been just over four years since Omusinga Charles Wesley Mumbere, the king of Rwenzururu, was arrested in Kasese, and he awaits trial from prison. The region continues to harbor separatist sentiments, barely contained by the threat of further UPDF clashes.

At the end of Museveni's current six-year presidential term, he will be 79. The prospects that the Ugandan government will have to contend with political chaos pending the failing of his health will increase the longer he waits to either designate a clear succession plan or allow truly free and fair elections. After 35 years of singular leadership, there is potential for the party or the UPDF to split along generational or ethnic lines or along North-South fault lines from previous conflicts, and/or for anti-Banyankole sentiment to flare. Should these factions collide, atrocity-level massacres are possible as different groups jockey for control—such as those seen in the Luwero Triangle as Museveni fought for power.
Scenario 3: Recommendations for Atrocity Prevention

For the U.S. Government
- Establish standing relationships with recognized scholars and CSOs focused on local atrocity prevention—e.g., Atrocities Watch Africa, Refugee Law Project, African Youth Initiative Network, Human Rights Network Uganda, Makerere University, Mbarara University.
- Utilize formal and informal communication networks to decrease misinformation and identify hate speech with localized cultural nuance.
- Support and increase UN and African Union capacity for peacebuilding and peacekeeping measures in Uganda through dedicated staff, increased funding, and leadership training.
- Engage and support representatives of the Early Warning Task Force, encouraging them to build lateral relationships with their counterparts abroad and promote both inward- and outward-facing analysis of mass atrocity dynamics.

For Ugandan National and District Government Bodies
- Reduce militarized response to current pandemic.
- Increase nonpartisan implementation of existing laws and protections, especially in refugee/host community relations.
- Increase and guarantee internet access, including social media access.
- Decrease barriers to international partnership of CSOs, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders working to build and maintain peace.

For the West Nile Community
- Convene local community accountability platforms to hold government duty bearers accountable, provide responses to community issues, and offer dispute resolution.
- Build partnerships between local CSOs and INGOs to prevent mission duplication and increase grassroots support of projects.
- Build a professional code of conduct that reflects community ethics and values, including anti-corruption, and publicly hold community duty bearers (police, healthcare workers, etc.) to this standard.
- Build international partnership of CSOs, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders to build and maintain peace.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Much of the current mass atrocity prevention literature focuses on intervention methods that emphasize early warning mechanisms and civilian protection. Mass atrocity prevention programming created and managed by outside actors, however, will be only temporarily successful in the absence of local capacity capable of managing long-term social change. Until local institutions have grassroots support, top-down peacebuilding models are not likely to produce strong or sustained community engagement.

The findings of this study highlight that local peace processes can help foster stability and that community-level peacebuilders and conflict prevention practitioners have a unique understanding of how conflict triggers may manifest on the ground. The following recommendations were written by the author and submitted to the West Nile community for review in a verification process hosted in November 2020. As McLoughlin argues, “the most effective thing the international community can do is to identify local sources of resilience and support them.” These recommendations focus on what key West Nile stakeholders report they need from their peers, government, multilateral institutions, and the international community to prevent future atrocities and build peace in their region, as well as in Uganda as a whole.

**For UN and International NGOs**

**Short term**

- Acknowledge and support local responsibility and expertise in conflict prevention.
- Hire local field staff and partner with local organizations already familiar with issues on the ground.
- Implement culturally responsive hate speech monitoring and tracking on social and traditional media.
- Implement an information pipeline for feedback on the ground to subject matter/policy experts and vice versa.
- Support the local engagement with, transparency of, and access to local formal and informal justice methods.
- Support International Conference of the Great Lakes Region Ugandan National Committee on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide and Mass Atrocities through increased funding and training.

**Long term**

- Incorporate and implement a comprehensive “do no harm” approach in order to anticipate and reduce unintended negative consequences in programming.
- Mainstream atrocity prevention into ongoing and future regional and subregional development and peacebuilding projects.
- Establish internal monitoring and evaluation systems that go beyond quantitative data to understand the equity and justice implications of their projects, to identify instances where their policies have failed to expand access to power and resources, and to create strategies that will remedy those instances.
- Build a space for civil society organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions to synthesize global atrocity prevention research and practice with a focus on local implementation and reduction of counterproductive project interference and overlap.
For the U.S. Government

Short term
- Identify key community stakeholders and opportunities for supporting grassroots peacebuilding institutions.
- Establish standing relationships with recognized local scholars and CSOs focused on atrocity prevention—e.g., Atrocities Watch Africa, Refugee Law Project, African Youth Initiative Network, Human Rights Network Uganda, Makerere University, Mbarara University.
- Utilize formal and informal communication networks to decrease misinformation and identify hate speech with localized cultural nuance.
- Precede new project development with in-field conflict assessment, including an assessment of local CSO needs and capacity in order to minimize program duplication and support local capacity.
- Engage in co-design and co-implementation of goals and strategies with local communities, utilizing resources to support their expertise.

Long term
- Incorporate a “do no harm” lens and mainstream atrocity prevention into international development and foreign aid programs.
- Support and increase UN and African Union capacity for peacebuilding and peacekeeping measures in Uganda through dedicated staff, increased funding, and leadership training.
- Publicly commit to tackling corruption and to addressing inequities within their own projects.
- Review internal practices to create projects that reflect and engage with local values and norms.
- Create an appointed senior official position to coordinate responses to atrocity crimes and establish early warning and early response prevention programming, including hate speech monitoring in local languages.
- Engage and support representatives of the Atrocity Early Warning Task Force, encouraging them to build lateral relationships with their counterparts abroad and promote both inward- and outward-facing analysis of mass atrocity dynamics.
- Commit to hiring staff who represent the local communities they seek to engage in the field.

For Ugandan National and District Government Bodies

Short term
- Enact environmental protections of natural resources (e.g., water, biomass) in conjunction with sustainable use policies.
- Reduce militarized response to the current pandemic.
- Increase nonpartisan implementation of existing laws and protections, especially in refugee/host community relations.
- Increase and guarantee internet access, including social media access.
- Increase the capacity of police and justice systems (local council courts, magistrate courts, etc.) by recruiting additional staff, expanding infrastructure, and allocating further funding.
- Disincentivize corrupt practices through increased funding for social services and social service workers, enact a zero-tolerance policy for bribes, and facilitate an environment committed to nonpartisan accountability.
- Support International Conference of the Great Lakes Region Ugandan National Committee on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide and Mass Atrocities through increased funding allocation, access to government leaders, and membership transparency.
Long term
- Strengthen the capacity of the district leaders and courts that handle local disputes, through increased staffing and training.
- The Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development Uganda, through local community structures, should increase sensitization to and awareness about domestic violence and gender issues through public marketing and leadership training.
- Decrease barriers to international partnership of CSOs, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders working to build and maintain peace.

For the West Nile Community

Short term
- Increase fair access to and sustainable use of firewood.
- Increase local awareness and implementation of existing laws and protections, including laws against taking or giving bribes.
- Increase the number of people providing social services (police, healthcare workers, etc.) by recruiting additional staff, expanding infrastructure, and allocating further funding.
- Convene local community accountability platforms to hold the government duty bearers accountable, provide responses to community issues, and offer dispute resolution.
- Support communities hosting refugee settlements through employment opportunities, land grants, and sensitivity trainings.
- Distribute resources fairly between refugees and host communities.
- Build partnerships between local CSOs and INGOs to prevent mission duplication and increase grassroots support of projects.

Long term
- Establish local area land committees to handle and clear land ownership and use cases.
- Increase local education access.
- Strengthen the capacity of local leaders and courts to handle local disputes through increased staffing and training.
- Build a professional code of conduct that reflects community ethics and values, including anti-corruption, and publicly hold community duty bearers (police, healthcare workers, etc.) to this standard.
- Build an international partnership of CSOs, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders to build and maintain peace.
- Increase local engagement with and access to formal and informal justice methods.
CONCLUSION

A central tenet of this report is that while policy and funding must respond to imminent threats, effective tools for violence and atrocity prevention already exist within communities and can be used to reduce conflict in mid-risk countries. This study engaged directly with local populations to draw from their knowledge on current needs and understandings of peace and conflict on the ground. In doing so, this research found violence prevention and reduction strategies that address localized needs, many of which the community has supported for years. These should be further bolstered through governmental or INGO support, rather than re-created or made obsolete by well-intentioned external institutions. Deeper, more contextual research is necessary to build effective, long-term prevention and intervention policy.

In assessing the issues noted by respondents, it became clear that many of the issues frequently noted as conflict triggers can also be avenues for atrocity prevention. Investment in structural peacebuilding programs can transform potential threat multipliers into positive, sustainable sources of resilience. From incentivizing participation in eco-friendly agriculture through land ownership schemes, to hiring the large number of unemployed youths to build and staff schools, to building partnerships with refugee communities to replant trees and the renewable biomass they gather daily, there are creative ways for these triggers to become opportunities, provided there is investment, resources, and support.

The findings of this report encourage those invested in atrocity prevention to engage with established actors to build holistic atrocity prevention strategies and design efficient early warning and early response atrocity prevention efforts. Without such efforts in mid-risk countries, there is a real danger that localized tensions will fuel a wider security crisis. Local sources of resilience are the frontline defense against mass atrocities, and the international community should seek to support them as such.
APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this project focused on qualitative research with local stakeholders, as well as expert interviews and a desk review of relevant literature. The report draws upon desk research on mass atrocity prevention risk indicators, as well as original field research conducted from August through November 2020. Field data was gathered by a team of local actors with deep knowledge of the specific area and the broader region; the data was then transferred to the author for analysis. The members of the field research team in Uganda were recruited based on their prior experience with the subject matter and their reputations as local peacebuilders. The research included 47 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups with a total of 22 local stakeholders, as well as 11 semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts. The interview text was subsequently coded and analyzed for central themes. Local stakeholders were chosen by the field team from a predetermined list of categories provided by the author, including representatives from religious, governmental, and cultural institutions, as well as representative actors from refugee and host communities.

Key informant interviews were conducted with leaders from civil society organizations, district-level local government officials—including police, education, water, land, planning, and community-based service providers—as well as cultural and religious leaders. The research focused on communities in the districts of Adjumani, Moyo, Yumbe, Nebbi, and Arua, including the Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement, in the West Nile region of Uganda. Interviews were later conducted with local community members in conflict areas, including members of the Refugee Welfare Council (RCW1) and host community Local Council One (LC1) near the Rhino refugee settlement. Interviewees were asked about their community needs, including who responds to these needs and why; their perceptions of violence, and who was perpetrating it; perceptions of security and vulnerability; the strength and effectiveness of local peace and justice methods; and their perceptions of potential conflict in their community. Because the sampled individuals were specifically chosen because of their roles in local conflict prevention by the field team, the resulting data cannot be considered generalizable. The report highlights the perspectives of local West Nile actors and their perceptions of potential local, regional, and national conflict triggers. Larger numerical samples and broader geographic efforts might reveal different regional perspectives.

Travel to the field was limited by COVID-19 international travel restrictions and border closures. This limitation was partially mitigated through the use of online video technology that allowed the author to participate in the focus groups and community validation session virtually. The research team’s access to potential respondents was further limited by the rainy season, with torrential rains making some roads impassable and broad areas in West Nile sometimes inaccessible.
ENDNOTES


3 Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*.


5 Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*.


9 For more on methodology, see Appendix.


11 The USAID Field Guide is one of the key documents for understanding and mainstreaming mass atrocity prevention into U.S. foreign policy actions.


15 Straus, 185.


22 The Genocide Prevention Task Force report was released in December 2008. Co-chaired by Madeleine K. Albright and William S. Cohen, the task force developed the most comprehensive genocide prevention blueprint for U.S. policymakers to date.


Valentino, “Watch Lists’ and Early Warning for Mass Atrocities and Human Rights Abuses.”

Anocratic governance structures—anocracies—are characterized by a blend of both democratic and autocratic government characteristics.


Leopold, 66.

Leopold, 10.

Mutiibwa, Uganda since Independence, 137.


These documents appear in the bibliography.

For security reasons, we have not included the names of interviewees.


