

**ETHICAL ISSUES IN DETERMINING TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE MECHANISMS: A
CASE STUDY OF WAR VICTIMS IN GULU DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

This study was meant to explore the perceptions of war victims on ethical issues in determining transitional justice mechanisms, specifically to establish the ethical principles, to identify relevant actors in administering the transition as well as to analyze the ethical issues in the justice system used to address war atrocities. The aim was to provide ethically appropriate justice mechanisms and remedies that will bring lasting peace for the betterment of the war-ravaged Gulu district. The notion of transitional justice for the Acholi carries a strong sense of setting things right; encompassing the crucial yearning to end war; a desire to become self-sustainable and a profound need for redress of atrocities committed during the protracted cycle of violence.

While talks between the Government of Uganda and LRA during the Juba Peace talks in mid 2006 generated the best chance for peace in the over 20-year conflict, a lot of ethical issues about transitional justice mechanisms are still unclear and not comprehensively understood. Given the efforts being made, little is known about local mechanisms or their potential to foster reconciliation.

The study sample was selected purposively from local communities within Gulu district, with the triangulation method using key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Content analysis and interview guide with self administered questions were the instruments employed in the study; while data was analyzed using Ms. Word and Excel according to the objectives of study.

The findings reveal that many discussions have become disconnected from the ethical considerations in addressing the needs of war victims who were the most adversely affected community by the conflict. Consequently, their views are overlooked in debates yet they are likely to be key actors in any peace agreement, which is central to the sustainability of lasting peace.

In conclusion, the study recommends better understanding of war victims' perception on ethical issues in determining transitional justice. It's worth noting that achieving the goals of a transition and effective implementation of mechanisms is a daunting endeavour that requires devotion and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders . All in all, this study highlights the message of taking one's own place in establishing lasting peace through ethically appropriate mechanisms for the people of Acholi, such that these elements go along way toward restoring their human dignity.