



RWENZORI FORUM FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACE-Fort	Accelerating Epidemic Control in Fort Portal
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
FJDI	Foundation for Justice and Development Initiatives
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OBR	Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu
OVC	Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children
RFPJ	Rwenzori Forum for Peace and Justice
VSLA	Village Savings and Lending Associations

FOREWORD

Dear partners, friends and all people who strive for the cause of peace and justice,

I heartily congratulate you upon finishing the year 2023 and starting a new year, 2024. The year 2023 was punctuated by a series of events in the human rights terrain in Uganda, among others being the re-emergency of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) brutal attacks on innocent citizens, the passing of the Anti-homosexuality Act and the return of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu (OBR) cultural leader to his Kingdom. Further, the shrinking civil society space continues to be amplified by stringent rules and regulations that NGOs have to comply with as linked to the 2016 NGO Act and to other laws in Uganda. To date, NGOs have different compliance obligations to meet at over ten centres, including Uganda Revenue Authority, National Social Security Fund, the National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organizations, Financial intelligence Authority, and Uganda Registration Services Bureau.

The complex terrain for CSOs notwithstanding, the year 2023 was blessed by a series of events in the execution of the organisation's peacebuilding mandate. Notably, the commemoration of the memorial event in honor of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) victims of the 2004 massacre in Lukodi, Gulu district and; the annual commemoration of the International Day of Peace were critical spaces in furthering healing, truth telling, reconciliation and victim-centered accountability for past mass atrocities and human rights violations. Further, RFPJ secured a new partner, Saleve Foundation and renewed partnership with the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund for two years. In 2024, RFPJ continues to pay attention to the peacebuilding priorities embedded in her six-year strategic plan (2023-2028). Key of these include, rallying the Rwenzori region for peaceful 2026 general elections, strengthening local capacities for peacebuilding and violence prevention, amplifying the role of women and the youth in conflict prevention, contributing to Transitional Justice efforts in the country and accelerating social and economic empowerment of communities as an enhancer of peace.

Lastly, I recognise the tremendous contribution of all people of the Rwenzori region and Uganda to the growth of RFPJ in 2023, including but not limited to; all peace activists; the RFPJ Board and Staff; religious, cultural and political leaders; security agencies; RFPJ member organizations and other CSOs; the media; members of the public and; victims of conflicts and human rights violations. I acknowledge RFPJ donors and partners in 2023 including the Wellspring

Philanthropic Fund, the UN Women, Baylor College of Medicine Children's Foundation-Uganda and Saleve Foundation. With the support of these partners and donors, RFPJ was able to consolidate her work and scale up her interventions within and outside of the Rwenzori region.

May peace continue to prevail in our Rwenzori region and country! May the cause of peace and justice continue to thrive! And may we all be agents of love, peace, and hope.



Tuhaise Francis
Executive Director

VISION AND MISSION

Our vision is a peaceful and just society

Our mission is to create and strengthen synergies that further peace and Justice

ABOUT RFPJ

RFPJ is a Civil Society Organization established in 2002 to act as a convergence of synergies to foster sustainable peace, nonviolence and respect for human rights. RFPJ is legally registered with the National NGO Board to operate in Uganda, and its head office is located in Butebe, Bwamba Road, Fort Portal Tourism City. RFPJ seeks to prevent violence and build an infrastructure that can support sustainable peace and realization of rights. Specifically, RFPJ's mandate rotates around: (i) Creating and strengthening spaces for citizens, government, CSOs, private sector and development partners to engage and foster peace, non-violence, access to justice, and respect for human rights; (ii) Strengthening local and regional peace building infrastructure to harness the culture of peace and nonviolence; and (iii) Researching and sharing information to inform peace building and conflict management work.

CSOS THAT MAKEUP THE RFPJ MEMBERSHIP

- Anti-Mines Network-Rwenzori (AMNET-R) headquartered in Kasese District
- Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC) headquartered in Fort Portal City
- Kamwenge Development Centre (KDC) headquartered in Kamwenge District
- Kind Uganda headquartered in Kyenjojo District
- Kitara Civil Society Organizations' Network (KCSON) headquartered in Kagadi District
- Peace and Disaster Concern Uganda (PDC) headquartered in Kyenjojo District
- Program Enhancing the Underprivileged in the Rwenzori Area (PETURA) headquartered in Ntoroko District
- Rural Health and Education Mobilization for Development (RHEMD) headquartered in Kagadi District

- Rwenzori Agency for Integrated Development (Rwenzori AID) headquartered in Fort Portal City

PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED

In the year 2023, RFPJ implemented four underlisted projects

- Amplifying the participation of women in peacebuilding processes in the Rwenzori region
- Fostering Victim-Responsive Transitional Justice in Uganda
- Accelerating Epidemic Control in Fort Portal (ACE-Fort)
- Closing the gap: Secondary School Education for all Girls in Ntoroko and Bundibugyo districts

KEY PROGRAMMATIC MILESTONES

Galvanizing women's role in conflict management in the Rwenzori region:

Between 2021 and 2022, created new and strengthened existing structures of grassroots women peace actors in areas of conflict identification, analysis, management, resolution and reporting within specific conflict hotspots in the Rwenzori region. As the project neared completion, in 2023, RFPJ together with the strengthened women structures developed a sustainability strategy intended to sustain the conflict management efforts and achievements gained during the project period. Further, several interactive and informative radio talk shows to rally women for conflict prevention were conducted as well as a regional meeting with women leaders to review the sustainability strategy and have it implemented. These engagements provided spaces for continued collaboration and enhanced synergies among women conflict management structures as precursors for sustainability of the project initiatives.

Victim-centred advocacy for human rights: In 2023, RFPJ undertook several interventions to support victims' pursuit of their rights. Notably, 120 leaders of

victims' groups and associations (from the Rwenzori and Northern Uganda regions) were trained in areas of leadership, group dynamics and advocacy as a way of empowering them to take lead in advocacy



A section of leaders of victims' groups and associations from the Rwenzori region after a training in leadership and group dynamics

campaigns within their respective regions.

Further, RFPJ supported the conduct of national level meetings and dialogues between representatives of victims and national duty bearers including Members of Parliament, the Amnesty Commission, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda. These dialogues not only gave victims opportunity to speak about their plight and advocate for their needs and interests, but also served as platforms for networking and information sharing that will enable victims to sustainably influence multistakeholder response to the needs and interests of victims of past conflicts.

In November 2023, RFPJ supported victims of past conflicts from Rwenzori and Northern Uganda regions to petition the office of the Speaker of Parliament of Uganda on the need to, among others, fully implement the National Transitional Justice Policy and also enact the Transitional Justice law to address the peculiar



Representatives of victims from the Rwenzori and Northern Uganda regions handing over a written petition to the leadership of the Greater North Parliamentary Forum, at Parliament.

needs and interests of victims. The petition was signed by 20,74 victims and received by the leadership of the Greater North Parliamentary Forum.

Commemorating the 2004 LRA massacre at Lukodi Community Centre, Gulu District:

District: On May 26th 2023, RFPJ in partnership with the Foundation for Justice and Development Initiative organised memorial prayers in memory of 69 victims who lost their lives in a massacre by the LRA rebels in May 2004. Commemorated under the theme: *“Transparency matters for victims’ reparations and recovery process”*, the event provided a platform for over 300 stakeholders to dialogue and make strides on fostering a victim-centred post-conflict recovery process as a precursor for consolidating the current region’s peace, stability and social cohesion. At this event were 30 representatives of victims from the Rwenzori region.



RFPJ Staff (in white shirt) with other stakeholders laying wreaths at the Lukodi massacre memorial monument in Lukodi, Gulu district

Commemoration of the 2023 International Day of Peace: Commemorated under the theme: *“Actions for Peace”*, the event gathered over 260 stakeholders to reflect on the notion of collectivity in advancing the cause of peace in the Rwenzori region. In attendance were representatives of victims of past conflicts from the Rwenzori and Northern Uganda regions, religious, political and cultural leaders from the Rwenzori region, and officiated by the Minister of State for Luweero-Rwenzori Triangle affairs. On this occasion, victims of conflicts from the aforementioned regions petitioned the Minister on the need for Government to

profile and accordingly mainstream the needs and interests of victims into all government programming, enhance transparency and accountability in handling issues of victims, and also provide livelihood support to victims.



A section of stakeholders attending the International Day of Peace celebrations in Fort Porta, September 2023

Closing the gap: Improving access to secondary school education for girls in Ntoroko and Bundibugyo districts: Owing to the high rate of school dropout among girls in the two aforementioned districts, RFPJ with support from Saleve Foundation, in September 2023, rolled out an intervention aimed at unearthing barriers to girl child education and possible solutions, and consequently generate data to help the education policy implementors in designing interventions to enhance girls' access to and retention in secondary schools. As processes, RFPJ consulted relevant stakeholders in both districts including school administrators, District Education Officers, and District Inspectors of Schools, Resident District Commissioners, and District Community Development Officers.

Further, 2041 girls from selected 11 schools (08 in Bundibugyo district and 03 in Ntoroko district) were interviewed to generate data on the barriers to access to and retention in secondary schools and their possible solutions. Outcomes of these consultations will culminate into the development of district-specific girls' education manifestos that will be disseminated at the district and national levels, for purposes of bringing girls' plight to the attention of district and national-level policy makers, influencing public attitude towards girl child education, and

enhancing evidence-based advocacy for girl child education in the Rwenzori region.



RFPJ Staff (in green) interacting with female students at Rwebisengo Secondary school, during data collection on barriers to girl child education in Ntoroko district

Embracing media in advocacy: In 2023, RFPJ invested in media advocacy by publishing 02 statements in the national print media, producing and running of 02 documentaries on national television, and producing and virtually sharing of six advocacy video clips. These statements, documentaries and video clips focused on advocating for the enactment of the national TJ law, exposing the plight of victims to national stakeholders, and giving victims platform to advocate for their needs and interests. To enhance their reach and possible impact, RFPJ deliberately strengthened her media space and visibility by among others, opening up a YouTube page, expanding the organisational website, and enhancing visibility on Twitter.

End of Partnership with Baylor College of Medicine Children's Foundation-

Uganda: In September 2023, RFPJ's project partnership with Baylor Uganda formally came to an end. This 5-years collaboration in the implementation of "Accelerating Epidemic Control in Fort Portal (ACE-Fort Project)" aimed at combating the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Kabarole district and Fort Portal City, ending Gender-Based Violence, and addressing socioeconomic vulnerabilities among OVCs and caregivers. During the five-year span, RFPJ worked with 11 government health centres to support HIV positive persons in accessing Antiretroviral treatment (ART), conduct viral load monitoring, offer psychosocial support and adherence counselling, health education, and community sensitization on children's rights. A total number of 5699 OVCs and caregivers from 2375 households benefited from the aforementioned services, alongside nutrition support, VSLA formation and strengthening, and establishment of income generating activities. On September 28th 2023, a dinner was organised



RFPJ & Baylor Fort Portal Staff during a dinner to mark the end of the project

at Toro Botanical Gardens to celebrate the achievements made and a smooth partnership journey moved by the two partners.

Advancing socioeconomic rights of OVCs and Caregivers in Fort Portal City and

Kabarole district: RFPJ partnered with Baylor College of Medicine Children's Foundation-Uganda to address socioeconomic vulnerabilities among OVCs and Caregivers in 2375 households infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS in Kabarole

district and Fort Portal City. In this undertaking, RFPJ provided farm inputs such as high yielding crop seedlings to beneficiary households aimed at improving the quality and quantity of their farm output, nutrition, food security and subsequently household income. To achieve this, the above households were given free agricultural advisory services and training in kitchen gardening.

Further, RFPJ strengthened 38 Village Saving and Lending Associations (VSLA) with over 900 members of these associations, all of whom are OVC caregivers, getting trained in best microfinance governance and management practices. Through these VSLA groups, caregivers were supported with craft making materials used in making baskets, mats and ropes, aimed at boosting their income, improving savings and investments, and helping them to graduate from vulnerability to financial resilience.

AREAS OF INFLUENCE

Countering financial fragilities through livelihood support: RFPJ partnered with Baylor Uganda to offer free agricultural extension services as well as farm inputs to over 500 families affected by HIV/AIDS in Kabarole district and Fort Portal city aimed at improving the quality and quantity of their farm output and subsequently household income. Further, RFPJ strengthened 37 village saving and lending associations with over 900 members of these associations getting trained in best microfinance governance and management practices. Further, over 900 OVC caregivers organised in VSLAs were trained and further with craft making materials used in making baskets, mats and ropes, to boost their household income and help them to graduate from vulnerability to financial resilience.

Fostering victim-centred Transitional Justice: RFPJ consolidated her TJ work by among others, solidifying her partnership with Foundation for Justice and Development Initiative (FJDI) in Northern Uganda and harnessing local, regional and national TJ synergies. Specifically, RFPJ and her aforementioned partner

identified and worked with groups and associations of victims of past conflicts in the Rwenzori and Northern Uganda regions, fostered cross regional learning experience between victims in Northern Uganda and their counterparts in the Rwenzori region, and scaled up regional and national level engagements to influence stakeholder response to the pressing needs and interests of victims. Further, RFPJ took advantage of the growing media spaces to publicise her advocacy initiatives and blow out the voices of victims.



Victims of the LRA war from Northern Uganda and those of the ADF insurgency from the Rwenzori region having informal conversations around a campfire organised in Fort Portal, in September 2023

Combating the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Rwenzori region: In 2023, RFPJ's partnership with Baylor Uganda enhanced access and adherence to HIV/AIDS-related services for people infected or affected with HIV/AIDS. Specifically, RFPJ conducted appointment tracking, psychosocial support and ART adherence counselling for HIV positive persons, viral load monitoring and free health education. To scale up these interventions, RFPJ integrated HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns into her different project activities and interventions, extending the awareness campaigns to over 200,000 members of the public in the Rwenzori region.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Gender: For programmatic and strategic reasons, RFPJ treats gender as a cross-cutting issue within her programming and program delivery protocols. Specifically, RFPJ runs a youth and gender desk that oversees gender mainstreaming initiatives on grounds that women, men, boys and girls are equal before and under the law even though women and girls, to a greater extent, remain socially, economically and politically disenfranchised. In 2023, RFPJ increased the percentage of directly targeted female stakeholders from 30% to 40%. Further, RFPJ deliberately worked with and through formal and informal women structures to further her peacebuilding and conflict management mandate. These structures included over 40 formal and informal women groups including women councils, elected women leaders and women-run CSOs. Further, RFPJ continued to pay attention to GBV as a programmatic issue, strengthened her gender desk, and increased women's participation in the planning, execution and evaluation of RFPJ projects and programs.

HIV/AIDS: HIV/AIDS remains both a threat to peace and an outcome of violent conflicts. As such, RFPJ has for years, sought to map out and address HIV/AIDS issues within her mandate. In this effort, RFPJ ran an HIV/AIDS specific project directly targeting over 5000 OVC and caregivers in Kabarole district and Fort Portal City. To harness this effort, RFPJ integrated HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns into her different project activities and interventions, extending the awareness campaigns to over 200,000 members of the public in the Rwenzori region.

Environment: RFPJ is cognizant of the rapid climatic changes and their impact on the socioeconomic wellbeing of communities in the Rwenzori region. As such, the organisation continues to invest in environmental conservation initiatives, both within her projects and in external spaces. In all her livelihood support programs, RFPJ promoted the adoption of environmental-friendly practices and use of organic solutions to improve farm outputs. Further, environment and climate change messages were mainstreamed within RFPJ's human rights awareness campaigns.

DONORS AND PARTNERS

RFPJ extends sincere gratitude to all her donors in 2023, namely; Baylor College of Medicine Children's Foundation Uganda, UN Women, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, and Saleve Foundation for making her work possible. Other partners that RFPJ worked with include; Uganda Human Rights

Commission; Amnesty Commission; Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs; Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Office of the Prime Minister; Parliament of the Republic of Uganda; religious and cultural leaders; Local Governments in the Rwenzori and Acholi subregions; security agencies; the media; LRA and ADF victims' groups and associations; RFPJ member organizations and; the RFPJ Board. Lastly, RFPJ heartily appreciates communities in the Rwenzori and Northern Uganda regions for accepting and embracing RFPJ programs.

RFPJ HUMAN RESOURCE IN 2023

Name	Position
Tuhaise Francis	Executive Director
Nankima Florence Ninsiima	Finance and Administration Manager
Opio Francis	Research, Documentation and Knowledge Management Advisor
Baguma Fosca	Human Rights Specialist
Twesige Emmanuel	Human Rights Officer
Atuhaire Elizabeth	Human Rights Officer
Kyampaire Kellen	Human Rights Officer
Ayesiga Sharon	Accountant
Murungi Mathias	I.T Officer
Karatunga Geofrey	I.T Assistant
Nahurira Joan	Economic Strengthening Assistant
Asiimwe Scovia	Administrative Assistant
Ategeka Amos	Driver
Atuhaire Florence	Office Assistant
Mugume Clovice	Security Guard
Twebaze Emmanuel	Security Guard

PHOTOS



Members of a Parliamentary Forum on Peace and Justice during a meeting with representatives of victims of the LRA and ADF wars, at Parliament, July 2023

August 21st 2023
New Vision



Uganda Urgently needs a National Transitional Justice Law

Uganda has had numerous conflicts since attaining independence in 1962. These conflicts include the 1980 – 1985 Uganda National Rescue Front 1 (UNRF I) war; the Uganda People's Army (UPA) insurgency in 1987; the 1986-1997 Holy Spirit Movement of Alice Lakwena; the 1980's National Resistance Army (NRA) war; the 1986-2006 Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebellion; the 1990s UNRF I & II and West Nile Bank Front war; the 1986 – 1994 National Army for Liberation of Uganda (NALU) war and; insurgencies orchestrated by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) starting in the 1990s. As a result of these and several other violent conflicts in the country, thousands of Ugandans lost their lives, property and livelihood. Some sustained permanent physical injuries while others continue to bear the trauma associated with unspeakable human rights violations and abuses, they suffered during conflicts. Past conflicts shattered social and family networks resulting into an insurmountable number of orphans, widows, widowers and homeless children.

We acknowledge the Government of Uganda's efforts in addressing the violent past through administrative, policy and institutional mechanisms, notable of which include the 1971-1974 Commission of Inquiry into the disappearances of persons in Uganda; The 1986-1994 Commission of Inquiry into violation of human rights that occurred between December 1962 – January 1986; The Amnesty Act of 2000 aimed at ending rebel insurgencies in the country and; The Juba Peace Process from 2006- 2008 aimed at ending the 20 year conflict in Northern Uganda between the Government of Uganda and the LRA. Further, we acknowledge the establishment of the International Crimes Division (ICD) of the High Court in 2008 and the passing of the International Criminal Court Act in 2010 to further prosecution of international crimes as an aspect of transitional justice (TJ).

We appreciate the Cabinet's passing of the National Transitional Justice Policy (NTJP) in 2019 to address widespread human rights violations, enhance legal and political accountability, promote reconciliation, foster social reintegration, and contribute to peace and security. Further, we applaud efforts of the 9th, 10th and now the 11th Parliament for attempting to rally the country towards the enactment of the TJ law.

We are however concerned that the process of enacting this law is taking longer and thus, not making it possible for TJ to be justiciable in the country as a foundation for true national healing, reconciliation and propagation of long-term peace.

Concerned that a delay in enacting a TJ law is bound to slow down past and current progress in constructively dealing with the aftermath of past conflicts and by extension, undermine the country's pursuit of long term peace and stability, we implore, the Parliament of Uganda and all other stakeholders in the country and Government to expedite all necessary processes and actions aimed at having the TJ Bill presented, discussed and passed by the 11th Parliament into law.

Further, we implore that the TJ law among others, invests in promoting accountability for past crimes; furthering individual and communal reparations and rehabilitation of victims of conflicts; enabling and empowering informal mechanisms for justice and reconciliation; fostering national dialogue and reconciliation and; strengthening formal and informal institutions and processes that will guarantee and sustain national cohesion, a culture of respect for human rights and sustainable peace.

This statement is published under a joint initiative by Rwenzori Forum for Peace and Justice (RFPJ) and Foundation for Justice and Development Initiatives (FJDI). RFPJ is a Civil Society Organization established in 2002 to act as a convergence of synergies to foster sustainable peace, nonviolence, and respect for human rights in the Rwenzori Region of Uganda and beyond. FJDI works to promote sustainable peace, justice, development, and economic recovery in Uganda.

An excerpt of a print media statement published by RFPJ and her partner FJDI in the New Vision, August 2023

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