

Lives at risk



IRIN/Richard Pitsowa

Annuarite Tagenge, aged 17, is still searching for the surviving members of her family, having spent almost a year walking through the forest to find them. She and her family fled the territory of Dungu in the northeast in December 2008, after attacks by Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels and a subsequent joint Congolese and Ugandan government army offensive to oust the rebels. Tagenge, who was then 16, was wounded and admitted to hospital in Dungu for surgery; along with thousands of civilians, she later fled the hospital for the bush.

"When the fighting started, we fled through the forest, [with] my whole family... and we fell into the hands of the LRA rebels. They killed my father and mother. Four of us survived; my brother, my two sisters and I. We then continued into the bush but the LRA fighting and attacks continued, forcing me to be separated from my brother and sisters. I was all alone.

As I tried to find my family, people advised me to look for them [towards] Bunia [about 700km south]. I then headed towards Bunia with three other girls. Unfortunately, we were often ambushed by the LRA in the forest. Along the way, we sucked on sugar cane that FARDC [Congolese army] soldiers gave us out of pity; we had no money for food, our clothes were torn, we were almost naked. I am wiped out from the journey, my feet are swollen, I suffered a lot because of the wound from the operation and [was sick] in my lower abdomen and back, but there was no medicine. On arrival in Bunia, my three friends found their families — but not me. A woman took me into her house, just after we arrived here, but three days later her husband chased me away.

Even if I do not find my family, I want to live, to continue my studies and to become somebody... What have I done to deserve all this suffering?"

For more information, visit IRIN

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=87774>

Fitina Yallala

"My husband is dead. I am here with my three grandchildren, aged ten, eight and seven, who live with me. I used to have ten grandchildren, but the others all got sick and died.

Look at what I am living in, look at my home now: it is awful. The four of us have to live in here. I am not strong enough to go and collect water and gather food, so my grandchildren have to do it for me, for us.

I hope that in the future we will be able to get the food and the water we need, and shelter from the rain. Most of all, I want peace."



Oxfam/Pierre Peron



Oxfam/Pierre Peron

Kuba Augustin

"I have been here for three months now. I am here with my family: there are 12 of us. My youngest child is five and the eldest is 15. This is not the first time that we have been displaced. Most people in my community have had to move many times. I have had to move several times this year and last year. This situation is not new to us.

All our belongings – our mattresses, our means to get food – are at home. The government now needs to provide us with the things we lack. I am at a loss. I have children to protect and to look after, and I have nothing. Our lives are at risk. My children need an education; they cannot go to school in this situation. Where are they to go? Where are we to go? We need peace before we can go home."

Claude,* 21 years old, interviewed in September 2010 in Niangara Territory, Oriental Province, DRC.

"The LRA went from village to village, killing and kidnapping people as they went. They arrived at my house at 6 o'clock in the morning and tied me up. They ransacked the house, taking pots and pans, food, and other valuables. They then tied me to other boys and young men in our village and we were forced to carry the goods they were stealing from us. I remember asking myself who these men were and wondering what kind of person treats people like this, like animals.

We walked 3 kilometres to the next village, where the LRA men did the same thing, kidnapping more than 100 people. This time though, they counted out 20 people, tied them up, and killed them by hitting them on the back of the head. They told us to move on and we continued walking, still tied to each other and carrying the heavy loot. Every few kilometres we would stop and they would count out another 20 people and walk them into the bush. After a while, I was among the

group that the LRA separated from the rest. They tied our arms together behind our backs and forced us to kneel down. They took hammers, machetes and heavy sticks and began killing people one by one. One of the LRA men took a heavy gourd and bashed me on the back of my head. I blacked out.

When I woke up, I was still tied up and had several dead bodies piled on top of me. I spent four days drifting in and out of consciousness. When people arrived to bury us, they discovered that I was still alive. They untied me and carried me to the nearest hospital, where I took six months to recover from my head wound.

Where we live there is no mobile phone network or community radio, so communication is difficult. That is why the LRA were able to attack village after village. If we had had mobile phones, we could have been warned that they were coming and we would have fled before they arrived."

*Not his real name



Oxfam/Pierre Peron

Fitina, Kuba and Claude were interviewed by Oxfam field staff in DRC.