

## **The IDP Economy in Northern Uganda: A Prisoners' Economy?**

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The experience of displacement in Northern Uganda is unique due to several specific circumstances. First, the sheer number of people displaced. At the height of the war 1.3 million people, that is, almost the entire rural population of the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader were displaced in IDP camps. Secondly, these people were very effectively displaced, but their displacement was only a short geographical distance. In some cases, people could see their homes, but could not go there due to the security regulations under which they were placed by the Ugandan army. Thus, thirdly, they lived under very tight, but also haphazard security regulations, and their living conditions were appalling. They were constantly afraid, extremely poor, with limited cash income opportunities, almost no credit available and very few received remittances from relatives outside of the warzone. In addition, this was also a very young population, with more than 50 percent under the age of 15. The consequence was a violent life-world of inactivity, the kind of 'beggars cannot choose' 'prison-type' of economy whose very crude logic of governmentality forced people to make a living at the very margin of existence, trading, bartering, begging, waiting for whatever little bits of material goods and money that could come their way. This paper analyses this type of economy by utilising data the authors gathered in 2005 and 2007 for two large IDP Profiling exercises funded by the UNDP as well as a series of follow-up qualitative field visits.