

Country: *Uganda*

Name: *Justice and Reconciliation Project*

Artistic Medium: *Theatre*

For more information:

<http://www.northern-uganda.moonfruit.com>

Objective: To promote reconciliation through traditional methods after the conflict.

Northern Uganda has experienced over 20 years of conflict during which 1.7 million people have been displaced into overcrowded camps. The Justice and Reconciliation Project researches justice issues in the internal displacement camps in northern Uganda. To initiate dialogue and disseminate research, they draw on a number of song and traditional dance groups. Together with Ker Kwaro Acholi, the cultural institution representing the Acholi people of northern Uganda, JRP conducted a research project that determined that in order to move forward, culturally sensitive healing had to take place with traditional practices at a grassroots level.

One reconciliation ritual called Mato Oput is rare and is undertaken only in the case of intentional or accidental killing of an individual. The ceremony involves two clans bringing together the perpetrator and the victim in a quest for restoring social harmony. The final ritual, “drinking the bitter root” is a day long ceremony with symbolic acts designed to reunite the clans by washing away the bitterness and eating the liver of a sacrificed sheep. This process is being considered at peace talks as a means of promoting reconciliation and a number of dramas are being composed to communicate cultural processes to justice as a result.

Another ceremony concerned with the cleansing of an area through ritual sacrifice called “Moyo Piny” is used to chase away evil spirits and is undertaken at sites of massacres or war related fighting.