Every Wednesday, the National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre (NMPDC) in Kitgum organises a Film Exhibition & Debate. The aim of this activity is to provide the community with the opportunity to watch an educational movie, after which we engage in a discussion.

On Wednesday May 22nd War Witch was screened. Based on the DRC, the story of a 14-year-old girl is told. She has been kidnapped from her African village by rebels to become a child soldier. After escaping from the camp with an older albino soldier, she experiences for the very first time the joys of a peaceful and loving life, but a fresh tragedy will force her to confront and fight the ghosts haunting her mind.

The screening of War Witch was a great success. Of the 55 participants, 10 were women and 45 were men. Due to the school holidays, the average age was around 18 years. The audience was generally impressed with the movie, which bears an abundance of similarities with the conflict in northern Uganda. It provided them with the chance to see their own history in a new light. The discussion started with what the audience thought was the most remarkable thing of the movie. Raised by several people was the role of children in war. The use of child soldiers was considered a grave violation of children’s rights, afflicting children psychologically and socially. It was argued that the effect of war on children should not be underestimated. Also, the importance of rituals and traditions was recognised:

"Because Koguma had not buried her parents, she was haunted. By going home and burying her parents’ belongings she was able to create rest. This can also be connected to Acholi rituals. People perform rituals to be able to make peace and come to rest”

When asked how the situation in War Witch relates to northern Uganda, it was said that:

"Before watching this movie I though child soldiers were only used in northern Uganda. This movie showed me that this kind of barbarity was used throughout Africa”

“The focus of the Tiger [rebel leader in War Witch] was against government forces. The LRA didn't care whether it was government or civilians"

Especially the issue of returnees was of interest:

“The people in this movie were having big problems. The people who had to join the rebels suffered. The people who stayed at home also suffered. But when the boy and the girl came home they were not given proper care. People who are traumatised should not be provoked. Here in Acholiland people were not always friendly towards LRA returnees. But by provoking traumatised people they might react violently or worse.”

“In northern Uganda there are first cleansing rituals like Mato Oput before people can be welcomed into the community. In this movie, the girl and the boy were just able to walk back into the village. Here civilians were often victim of the hostilities, in the movie that did not seem to be the case”