Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and depression amongst internally displaced persons in Northern Uganda

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COVERING LETTER

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to the email from BMC Psychiatry on 1 April 2008, please find attached the revised version manuscript entitled ‘Factors associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and depression amongst internally displaced persons in Northern Uganda’. Based upon the suggested revisions by the referees, the following changes/responses are given below.

Referee 1:
The referee suggested the following two points to be considered:

Point 1: It was recommended that comparisons of depression rates between Gulu, Adjumani and Bugiri districts be made. This recommendation has now been included (paragraph 2, page 9).

Point 2: It was noted that with such high levels of mental distress, direct mental health interventions would be very difficult and it was recommended that a comment could be made on this. We have responded to this by noting the importance of increasing comprehensive protection and support programmes in the camps to help reduce mental distress and as a preventative measure to reduce further exposure to trauma (paragraph 3, page 10). We have also noted (with reference) that some direct interventions to reduce PTSD and depression have shown some impact in northern Uganda, but that further investigation on the their effectiveness and feasibility is required given the size of the population affected by mental distress (paragraph 3, page 10).

Referee 2:
The referee suggested adding more relevant literature to the introduction. We have added some more references to the introduction (paragraph 1, page 2).

The referee also suggested adding figures to illustrate the main points. We have added 3 histograms to show the distribution of trauma exposure (Figure 1), PTSD (Figure 2) and depression (Figure 3).
The referee suggests two discretionary revisions which she notes can be ignored.

Point 1: It was suggested that the different types of stressors in the traumatic events could be separated out. We feel that the existing regression analysis which identified individual types of traumatic events with a statistical association with PTSD and depression (Table 5 and related narrative) is sufficient. We hope this is OK and appreciate the suggestion made by the referee.

Point 2: It was suggested that the cut-off point for depression could be raised above the one used in our study (≥1.75). The referee raises an important issue and we did note that there is a need for more in-depth validation and locally-developed cut off points (page 10, paragraph 1). In the absence of this in-depth validation, we feel it would be wiser to maintain the cut-off point at ≥1.75 as this is recommended by the instrument developers and has been successfully used in comparable studies in other conflict-affected settings. It was also suggested by the referee that we could add histograms to show the distribution of the outcome scores, and so we have added histograms for the scores for trauma exposure, PTSD and depression (see above). The referee also rightly notes the need to refer to depressive symptoms and we have used this term.

We have also made a minor addition to the headings for Tables 5 and 6 where we added ‘N=X’ for the PTSD and depression column headings to further clarify the number of respondents included in the regression analysis.

The alterations to the manuscript have been approved by all the authors. The updated version of the manuscript, the tables document, and the histograms have all been uploaded.

We are grateful to the time given by the referees and appreciate their helpful comments. We are pleased that both referees feel the paper is an article of importance in its field and recommend it for publication. We hope that our responses and alterations to the manuscript are acceptable. We do feel that the inclusion of this manuscript in *BMC Psychiatry* would significantly contribute to a broader understanding of conflict and mental health.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely. Bayard Roberts (corresponding author)