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ABSTRACT: To assist Ugandan reconciliation and conflict stabilization programs after 30 years of war, a forensic science training seminar aimed at Ugandan forensic practitioners, government officials, and NGOs was conducted. The aim of the seminar was to educate participants on best practices of large-scale forensic investigations used in post-conflict contexts with the intent of opening further dialogue for future communication, training, and assistance.

INTRODUCTION: Since independence in 1962, Uganda has experienced a series of internal conflicts over control of the government. As a result, tens of thousands of people have been killed or went missing.

Currently, Uganda is in the process of establishing a **National Transitional Justice Policy** aimed at fostering reconciliation between former warring parties and restoring trust between its citizens and with the government.

This **transitional justice policy** is to be **victim-centric** and **focused on truth-telling** in order to reach these goals. As part of a transitional justice process, **forensic science can play a role** serving the victims of mass-atrocity.

ON-GOING RESEARCH: In light of this **victim-centric approach**, and with experience working in other post-conflict contexts, our team of **cultural and forensic anthropologists** has been conducting research in northern Uganda **with community leaders and survivors** of the 1986-2006 **Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Uganda (GoU) conflict.** (FIG 1-3)

This ongoing research seeks to understand **if surviving victims** and affected communities **desire transitional justice processes and forensic investigation**, and if so, in what capacity?

Consistent with a victim-centered approach, **we seek to understand the social, cultural, religious, and political implications of potential forensic investigations.**

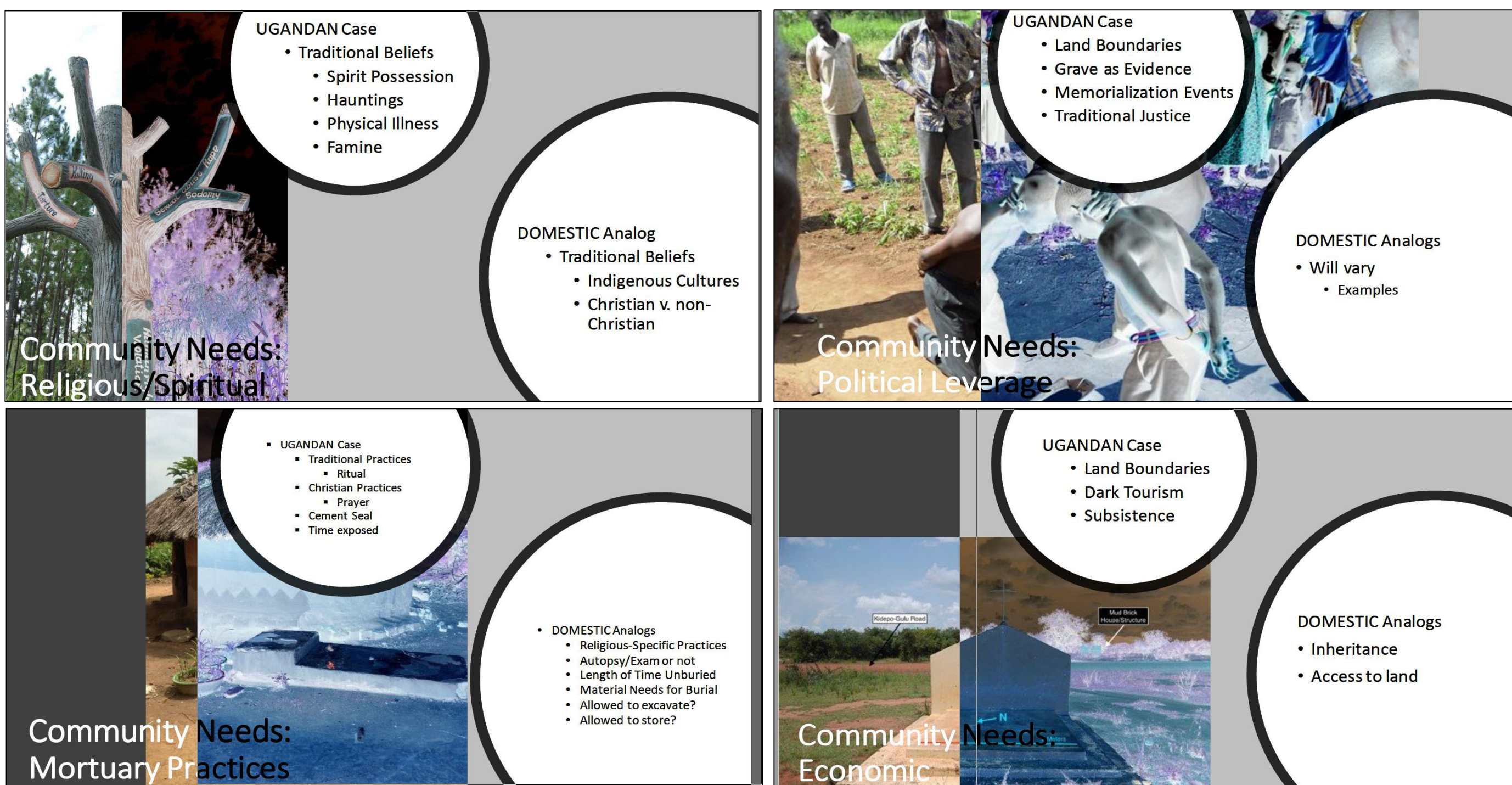


FIG 1. From 2011 to present multidisciplinary teams have sought to understand the affected communities needs and desires with regard to the capability and capacity of forensic sciences.

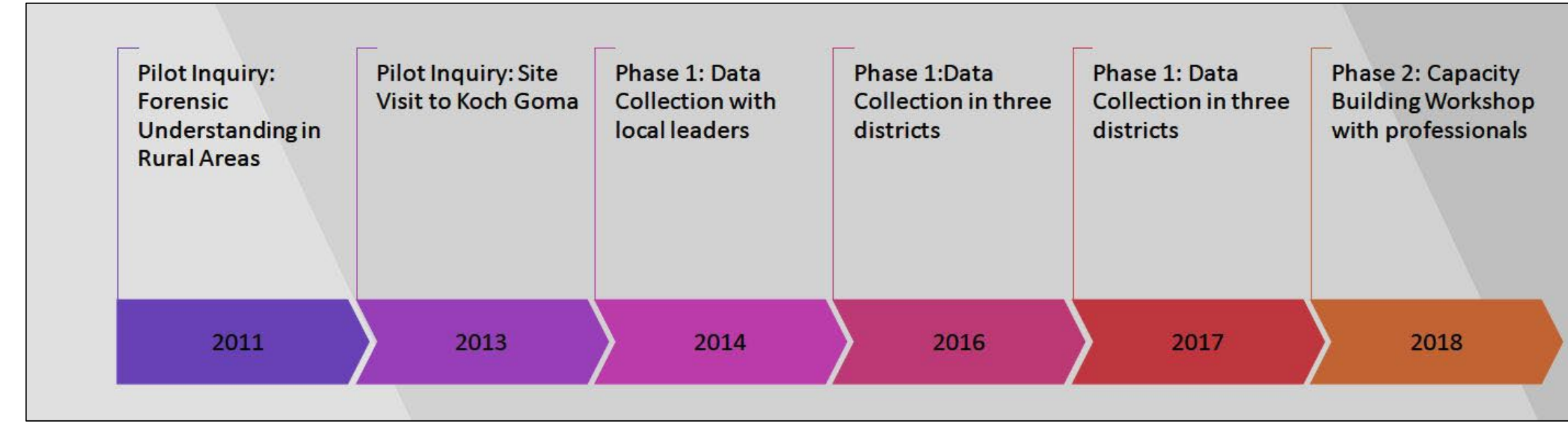


FIG 2. AAFS HHRRC grant was vital to continued implementation of Phase 2 of our larger research engagement with Ugandan communities, NGOs and GoU

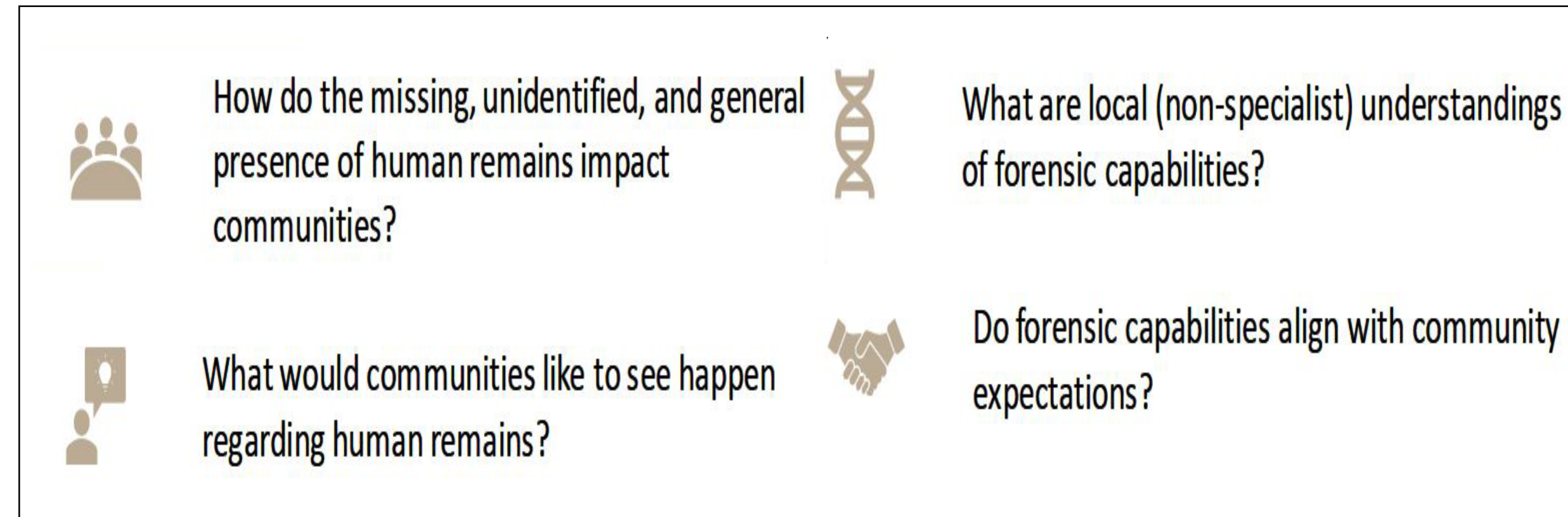


FIG 3. Research is ongoing to investigate these Broad topics to elucidate “next steps” for Uganda.

Our experience working in other post-conflict contexts tells us that **multi-disciplinary approaches to forensic investigations and human identification processes is essential.**

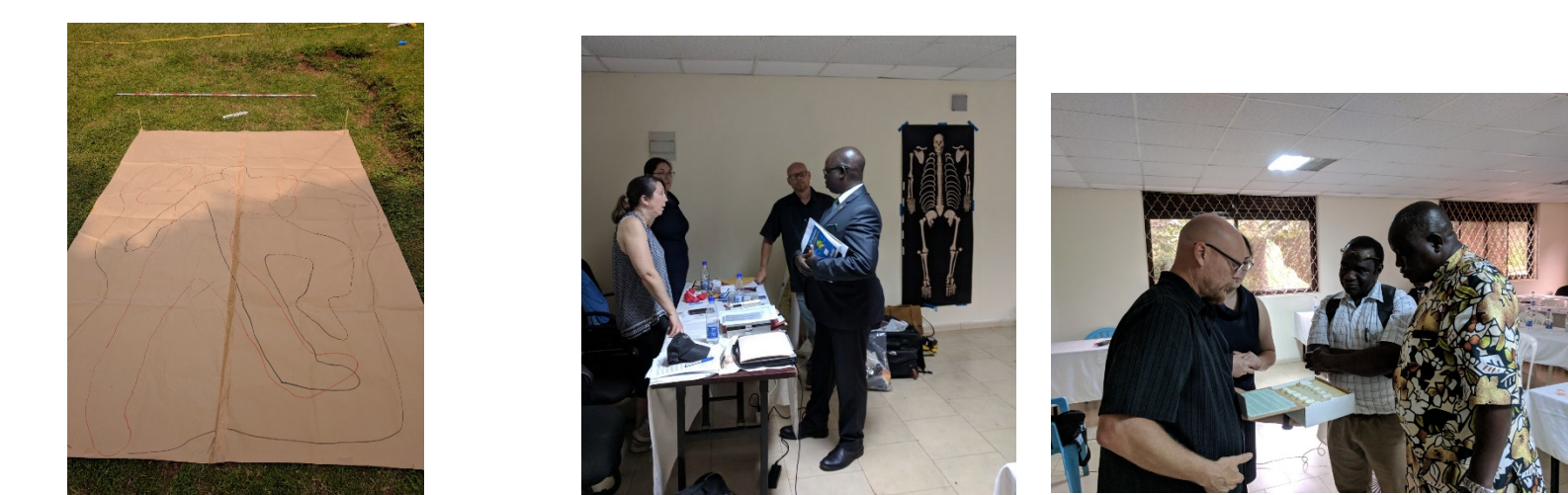
Unfortunately, **Uganda has limited capacity** to conduct the **large-scale forensic investigations** that would be needed in a transitional justice-type truth finding process

Certain fields, such as **forensic archaeology and anthropology are non-existent**, and most laboratories do not have the equipment or funding to process evidence.

With this understanding, **we conducted a capacity-building workshop (FIG. 4)** focusing on methods and techniques necessary to conduct large-scale, multi-disciplinary forensic investigations.



FIG 4. The three day capacity building workshop in Kampala focused on forensic archaeology and anthropology, and contained overviews and examples of transitional justice mechanisms, DVI processes, a DNA primer, and other relevant topics.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thank you to the Participants (right) of the workshop, and these institutions (below) for their contributions to this overall research project- Special thanks to AAFS HHRRC, and NIJ for funding this Workshop as well as the FTCoe, who supported a subsequent Webinar promoting dialogue and awareness of this topic.



CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP: The DEC 2019 3-Day workshop, funded by the HHRRC included both **lecture and practical exercises** in forensic archaeology and anthropology, and contained overviews and examples of transitional justice mechanisms, DVI processes, a DNA primer, taphonomic explanations, and other relevant topics.

Participants included forensic practitioners as well as GoU officials and NGO representatives, ensuring a wide distribution of knowledge to those who are or will be involved in any upcoming transitional justice processes.



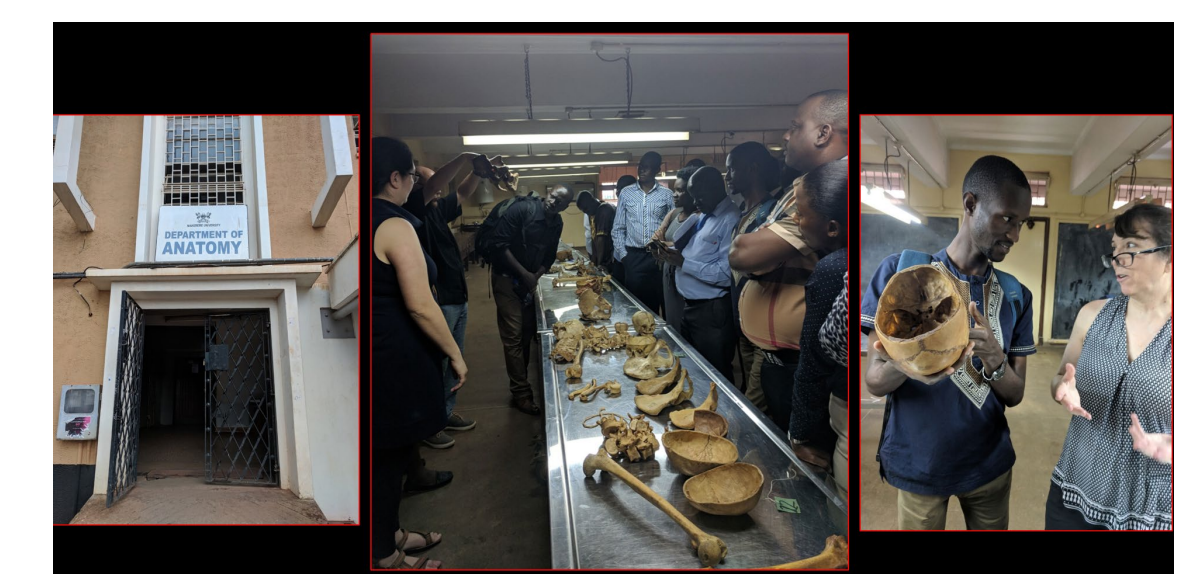
Dr. Sylvester Onzivua- a forensic pathologist from Mulago National Referral Hospital, Kampala-Uganda- was the main interlocutor for this effort – and was a driving force for the success of this workshop.



Prepared lectures were enhanced by thoughtful discussions by the participants, who came from diverse backgrounds



Lectures were supplemented with hands on activities, such as aging from pubic symphysis casts, and dentition, as well as trauma analysis



Human exemplars from the Anatomical collection – housed at the Makerere University Anatomy Department, was used to reinforce some of the lecture material, and to explore human anatomical variation



Outdoor demonstrations of small scale (burial), and a large scale (surface scatter) scenes and mapping fundamentals were set up. Map making, orienteering, tying the scene into permanent structures (datum sites) etc. were reinforced.

SOME FINDINGS:

- According to Acholi cultural traditions, proper burial is important
- Improper burials can cause great consternation among those who follow traditional ways
- Spirits of the deceased are believed to have the ability to affect the living, and without proper burial, they can negatively affect family and community to include :
 - * Nightmares
 - * Illness
 - * Droughts
- **Reconciliation** rather than **retributive justice** is also a tradition found in Acholi culture
- Uganda is in the process of establishing a **Transitional Justice Policy**, which incorporates **forensic investigation**
- Uganda possesses forensic expertise in **pathology, genetics, and police investigation**, these fields have been **geared towards domestic criminal investigations**
- Currently not prepared to handle a **large-scale** death investigation
- Participants were skeptical of the ability to use of **DNA** for such large-scale issues due to **current limited capacity**
- Participants questioned necessity of gathering crime scene evidence (like mapping a bomb/crash scene) because **“We know what Happened”**
- Expert testimony- we noted cultural/ legal system differences in scientific testimony standards. For example encouragement to **“be definitive”** versus present the range (in an age estimate for instance).

