

# MSF and minimalism

Northern Uganda

# Elements of the conflict

- A brutal insurgency – responded to in equal fashion by the Ugandan government.
- 90% of civilians displaced – lacking essential and basic means for survival.
- (Counter) Insurgency tactics make civilians and their livelihoods an essential part of the conflict.
- An absence of political will to assume responsibility for welfare & protection.

# Some elements in the humanitarian scene

- Humanitarianism vs. justice
- Military humanitarianism
- Humanitarianism vs. development
- Integration and coordination.

# The reality in northern Uganda (during conflict)

- Minimal presence and minimal services
- Significant medical need and absence of protection
- Insecure environment for civilians and humanitarian workers.
- A political vacuum in terms of state; welfare services part of the counter-insurgency tactics.

# A development opportunity?

- Redefining crisis?
- Naïve analysis
- Political responsibility
- Meeting immediate needs? Hardly.

# (MSF) Humanitarian action – minimalist?

- Limited in scope – huge in ambition.
- Maximalist in terms of presence, volume of activity, medical approach (AIDS/TB/ Nutrition).
- Principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence create the condition to achieve these ambitions.

# Development vs. humanitarianism

- Humanitarian action – to focus on people, not systems, targeting those still conflict-affected and significant medical need.
- Development - a distinct and inherently political activity – to focus there were immediate needs are indeed met.