

World Learning

Uganda

Care for the Exploited and Vulnerable Children of Uganda

For more than two decades, a civil war has been ravaging the land of Northern Uganda. Tens of thousands of people have died. At least 1.7 million people have been forced to flee their homes. In 2003, the UN Under Secretary General, Jan Egeland, called the situation in Northern Uganda “the biggest forgotten, neglected humanitarian emergency in the world.” The war has destroyed the livelihoods of those who call Northern Uganda their home. Food shortages are overwhelming and unclean drinking water has led to a recent outbreak of Hepatitis E, along with other devastating diseases. Children have been born and raised in camps set up for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) of Northern Uganda. Furthermore, during the 22-year war, some 66,000 children have been abducted from their parents, guardians and playmates, to be forcibly conscripted into a rebel army as soldiers, sex-slaves and laborers. The use of child soldiers in war is not unique to Uganda, but the number of children who have been directly involved in the violence of this war is staggering.



However, since early 2006 a fragile peace has prevailed in the area. This general calm is allowing a slow trickle of people to return home from IDP camps to their villages, overgrown and empty after years of abandonment and neglect. At-risk children who have escaped from rebel soldiers are returning to villages lacking clean drinking water and schools, and to communities suspicious of the children's past ties to the rebel army.

In 2008, World Learning began the implementation of a project aimed to serve the needy and vulnerable children of Northern Uganda, by using the greatest resource available: the older brothers, sisters, and neighbors of the at-risk children. World Learning, in partnership with the Ugandan NGO Straight Talk Foundation, will implement a Youth Leadership Training, preparing community youth to raise awareness and analyze the problems facing the younger children in their communities. The training will include sensitization, fundraising, proposal writing, project management, and monitoring and evaluation.

Following this training, the newly empowered Youth Leaders will return to their home villages and, with the continued guidance of World Learning and Straight Talk, will aid in meeting the urgent needs of vulnerable children. One of the most pressing needs they will support is the reintegration of vulnerable children into the communities from which they were abducted.



World Learning is committed to building the capacity of local populations to support the rehabilitation of their own communities. Harnessing the hopes and energies of the youth of Northern Uganda provides the greatest chance that a legacy of peace will be the inheritance of the next generation of Ugandans.

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World Learning, an international NGO and educational provider based in Washington, DC, and Vermont, USA, has been focused for 75 years on bridging cultures and transforming lives. Today, World Learning runs international development programs, study abroad, and graduate education in more than 75 countries, directly impacting the lives of thousands of people each year. The organization has an annual operating revenue in excess of \$100 million.

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