

## **Shocking conditions as Uganda's 18 Year War Displaces 1.6 million people Tens of Thousands of Abducted Children Forced into Child Soldiers You can help**

---

There are many tragic situations in the world today, such as Darfur in Western Sudan where suffering appears to have no limits. However, less known but equally as tragic is the extreme suffering in Northern Uganda where millions of people continue to endure unimaginable agony and deplorable humanitarian conditions resulting from an 18 year war which has failed to catch the world's attention or receive adequate response. 1.6 million people, mostly women and children from Uganda's three northern districts – Gulu, Kitgum and Pader – live as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in IDP camps under conditions which shock the conscience.

Amos (not his real name), age 16, is one of the 1.6 million. A former child soldier, Amos was abducted from his village in rural Pader four years ago when he was 12. He is one of tens of thousands of children – boys and girls – who have been abducted by a brutal militia, Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and through traumatizing rituals and training, forced into combatant service. Approximately 90% of LRA's soldiers today are children, some as young as eight, in numbers estimated to be between several thousand to as many as 12,000, led by adult commanders. Approximately 30,000 children have been abducted since the start of the war although the exact numbers can only be estimated. Tens of thousands of mostly rural villagers in Acholi, Lango and Teso have been brutally killed and hundreds of thousands have died from the effects of war since 1986. The horrific suffering and tragedies continue, largely hidden from the world.

The conditions in the IDP camps defy description. On average, 15,000-30,000 people live in each camp; some camps have up to 60,000 people. Most young children suffer from some degree of malnutrition. Many, with distended stomachs, are dying slowly. Caregivers, almost all of whom are women, many of whom are widows, are under huge pressure to feed their children, elder parents and large extended and surrogate families, without sufficient food and resources to accommodate all. Housing is mostly traditionally designed grass roofed huts, but without windows and built closely together for security reasons. Inside the huts, there is lack of adequate bedding or privacy and conditions are cramped, further damaging the social fabric. The camps are surrounded by units of the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) who try to protect camp residents from recurrent LRA raids and abductions. Many camp residents are infected with contagious diseases, and the crowded conditions help to spread disease. Sanitation is poor, with inadequate toilet facilities and poor drainage resulting in large pools and flows of disease-infested latrine overflows and sewerage water. Children play in this water, resulting in fungal infections and bacterial diseases. Inadequate supplies of clean water compound the hazards. Many people, especially children, suffer and die from preventable and treatable diseases – malaria, diarrhea, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases being among the most common. Many camp residents, especially women and girls, are HIV positive but do not receive management assistance or medical treatment. Many camp resident girls are former abductees who served as sex slaves or were forced to "marry" LRA commanders. Many became HIV positive and gave birth. Some of their children are also HIV positive. Family planning support, women's reproductive health services, basic sanitary supplies and condoms are almost nonexistent.

These are the daily conditions in which Amos, his peers, surrogate family members and the larger community endure in Pader Town Center IDP camp, which accommodates 24,000 people. Like many youth in the camps, Amos is an orphan and has no parents to look after his needs. Also, like other youth in the camps, Amos is an orphan because he was forced, during his abduction, to kill his parents. This is the method LRA uses to traumatize and brainwash children into rigid obedience – forcing children to kill family members, friends or neighbors as a ritual of abduction. LRA also mutilates and dismembers civilians during raids, cutting off lips, noses, eyelids and ears, and hacking off hands, arms, legs and feet, beating elders and raping women and girls. This leaves the survivors of a raided village or small town in a state of terror and shame. The defacement and disabling of people, young and old, has become a signature of LRA. Most of the mutilations are perpetrated by LRA child soldiers using knives, axes and machetes.

Amos' Pader District village was raided four years ago when he was 12. He was dragged to his parent's house. With guns blazing and soldiers shouting, his parents were told to make a choice who should live or die – Amos or them. His parents said they would be willing to die if Amos could be spared. Amos was handed a panga (machete) by LRA soldiers and told to kill his parents. At first he refused, so they bought a young neighbor boy Amos' age and killed him with a machete, stating that if he refused again, he and his parents would be slaughtered together. Amos took the panga and hacked away at his parents, killing them both. He and other young boys and girls from his village were marched to training camps in Southern Sudan where they learned to kill and mutilate. Some of the training in murder was carried out on local Dinka cattle farmers. The killing was done for practice and the cattle were stolen for food. Amos and his abducted peers quickly learned if they were disobedient, became sick or were perceived to be weak, they would be killed. Amos was forced to participate in the killing of some of his peers, other young boys from Uganda, who were accused of disobedience or of trying to escape. Amos participated in vicious beatings of other young boys and burying them alive as they pleaded for their lives. This reinforced the concept that any deviation from blind obedience was equal to asking first to be tortured, and then killed.

Amos and other child soldiers in his unit were also subject to brainwashing, especially around the notion that LRA's leader Joseph Kony was a Holy Spirit. Children are told by commanders they were chosen to participate in this holy war and are protected from harm. Children are taught to remove their shirts, rub oils on their chests and stand up in battle. Bullets, they are told, will bounce off their chests. Hence, children believe they are invulnerable to harm, and lose their fear of dying. Kony also guarantees their holy salvation if they are killed, so some children believe either they will not die or if they do, will wind up in holy salvation. This brainwashing, combined with their fearful obedience and the fact children are made to use machetes and axes to murder and maim, makes them more terrifying to both the civilian population and UPDF soldiers. During his two years as an LRA soldier, Amos participated in the killing and mutilation of mostly rural villagers in Sudan and Uganda, and the looting and burning down of villages. He did all he could to put out of his mind the circumstances which resulted in his abduction and to stay on the right side of his commanders. After two years, when he was fourteen, he used the trust he had gained to plot his escape. For most abducted children, their average stay is between 2-3 years before they escape or are rescued by UPDF during armed pursuit and battles with LRA. Amos was taken to a reception center for former abductees where, for the first time since he was twelve, he was free to be a young boy again. He went through a regimen of medical tests, had regular meals, and received counseling. Amos says most of his counseling was group counseling and he had three personal counseling

sessions before being sent to Pader Town Center IDP camp where he has lived for the past two years. This short duration of counseling was not enough, he emphasizes, and he still has a hard time dealing with how he misses his parents and the fact that he was forced to kill them.

Many, but not all, escaped and rescued children wind up in reception centers for various periods of time, such as those run by World Vision in Gulu and GUSCO (Gulu Support the Children Organization) supported by Denmark Save the Children, also in Gulu. At reception centers, former abductees receive psychological and medical care. Many children carry bullet wounds, and suffer from other physical injuries. Many are suffering from a wide range of infections, including skin and hygiene-related ailments, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Some rescued children opt to stay in town, mostly Gulu and Kitgum towns. While some have relatives or places to stay, most do not and become homeless and involved in destructive life styles. However, living in town, even on the street, is considered safer and more desirable by many children rather than returning to or living in IDP camps.

Still others become “night commuters,” in which tens of thousands of children march from their homes in IDP camps or nearby villages to Gulu Town and Kitgum Town to be protected from LRA abductions at night. Some of these are school children as young as six or seven; others are older. Most are sent by their parents to be safe at night, leaving as it become dark and walking three to four hours into town. There, they sleep on the street on cardboards and share blankets, while others stay at shelters or churches. Before dawn, they walk back to their camps or homes, sometimes as distant as 15 kilometers. Although providing temporary safe haven for children who are subject to LRA raids, night commuting is breaking down the social fabric of Acholi society. Children are together in large number, unsupervised by parents or mentors. The older children bully the younger, and older boys rape younger girls. Children become urbanized, and acclimated to street life. Night commuting compounds the growing generational divide between young and elders in Acholi society and further weakens a culture that has always been traditional and family oriented.

Most children and youth, however, are sent from reception centers to the IDP camps where they face harsh conditions and uncertain futures. Of Northern Uganda IDP camp's 1.6 million residents, the vast majority are women and children, of whom large numbers are widows and orphans. Many are former child soldiers, girls and boys who were abducted, victims who became perpetrators, girls who became sex slaves and mothers. Most children are suffering post traumatic stress disorders from their ordeals. Some are children who were born in the bush. Former abductees were almost all exposed to large amounts of violence and severe traumatic events including witnessing or participating in the killing of family members, neighbors, teachers and friends. In addition, almost all former abductees were forced into separation from their families, forced to bury bodies, forced to participate in or were exposed to torture, forced to hide for long periods of time, engaged in forced labor, destroyed property, took significant risks for food and water, participated in robberies and other crimes, and witnessed killings. Almost all girls were raped and many boys were forced into committing acts of sexual abuse. Many former child soldiers were forced to drink their own urine when there was no fresh water. Many burned houses. Most suffered significant injury, from bullet wounds to knife wounds. Many became diseased. All were traumatized.

Their needs therefore are many and holistic, including needs for counseling, mentorship, adequate nutrition, primary health care, management or treatment of diseases, education, skills training, reproductive health services, reconciliation and healing. Although some of these needs are accommodated, such as traditional reconciliation and healing ceremonies and rituals, most of their needs are not provided or sustained. Hence, in Amos' case, for instance, he was sent to Pader Town Center IDP camp as an orphan without resources or surrogate family. Two years later, he struggles for food on a daily basis, and is forced to choose between attending Grade 7 level school classes or working in an IDP camp garden as a condition for being allocated food. The World Food Program provides the food for Uganda's 1.6 million IDP camp residents, sacks of dried food delivered by military convoys, but it is not enough in quantity or nutritional value and many, especially orphans like Amos, fall through the cracks in the system. Since he is determined to become educated and succeed in life, Amos chooses his classes, and friends bring food to him most evenings. If he passes Grade Seven, Amos wonders how he will attend high school and who will pay the school fees. Amos' plans: to attend secondary school outside Pader, graduate and go on to university as a science and math major. He wants to build his life and make a lifelong contribution to the Acholi community as an educated person. He also wants to contribute to the peace building efforts, and is one of the many whose story needs to be told. In the meantime, Amos has no access to predictable support, no family to rely on, and his hope is based on his own self-determination, the work of grassroots organizations, surrogate family, mentorship and camp leadership. However, with 24,000 camp residents and so few human or material resources, Amos' support base is stretched out among more people than his supporters can accommodate. Thus, Amos, like many youth, remains in doubt about his future.

The suffering endured by women in Northern Uganda has few comparisons. Many are widows, their husbands having been killed by LRA rebels during this war, or by government soldiers during the Amin regime or have died from AIDS related diseases. Most women in IDP camps have also endured personal trauma in the form of rape, beatings, torture, loss of family and exposure to a wide range of traumatic scenarios. Women are responsible as caregivers for their children and surrogate children, and for the care of elders, but without sufficient resources to do so, many women suffer from severe forms of depression. Most telling: suicide rates and attempted suicides of women in Northern Uganda IDP camps are amongst the highest in the world. This is all the more dismaying since suicide runs counter to cultural norms in Acholi society. In addition, many women are unable to contend with their own health conditions, such as being HIV positive, cannot provide medical treatment for their children and elders and do not have access to basic sanitary and hygiene supplies. Women are also consumed with day long tasks of waiting on long lines in IDP camps to pump and carry water, work in the few gardens permitted in the camps and gather firewood. Gathering firewood is dangerous because going outside the camps exposes women to attacks from the LRA, and also the wrath of soldiers for venturing outside the camp. Women need more means and support to improve their coping mechanisms as well as the physical and material support for basic food, water, medical and health needs.

The majority of Uganda's Acholi people are now displaced, abducted as child soldiers, living in IDP camps or similar resettlement communities, night commuting or trying to eke out a living in northern district towns. As a result, the strong, land-based, family oriented traditional nature of Acholi culture is deteriorating at a fast pace. For centuries, Acholi society was cemented by a strong family and village based economy of cattle

ownership, agricultural production, the leadership of elders and the inheritance of land, farms and cattle to children. As in many traditional African societies, the burial of elders on ancestral lands, traditional story telling, the evening family meals, dance and ritual sustained Acholi economic and social structures and norms, with a great amount of respect afforded to parents and elders. Today, there is a growing generational divide. The elders, especially men, are no longer able to provide for their families, or turn over their land and cattle to children, creating a feeling of uselessness and resulting in chronic depression. Women are degraded and debased in front of their children, and no longer have the means to serve as functional caregivers. Children and youth are abducted and have killed family members, creating shame, guilt, suspicion and anger between children and families. Many children are now on their own, not being educated and no longer are nourished by family traditions or supervised by elders and older siblings. Hence, many children are involved in anti-social behavior that shocks elders and prevents children from developing into responsible young adults. The living conditions in the IDP camps, especially the cramped quarters, violate every aspect of Acholi culture. In short, the Acholi community is falling apart.

So what are the origins of an eighteen year war in which more people have died and been displaced than in Darfur yet goes on and on, invisible from the rest of the world and detached from the rest of Ugandan society?

To understand the origins of the war and the search for solutions requires an understanding of the role of colonialism on African culture, the specific colonial and post-colonial political history of Uganda and the particulars of the Lord's Resistance Army that started this war in the first place.

As is well documented but too little studied at the popular and school levels, African kingdoms and societies were the pinnacle of global civilizations for thousands of years, having the most advanced discoveries and applications of math, health care and the sciences, well developed trade and economic systems, efficient transport, irrigation and agricultural systems, valued artisan skills, resilient systems of governance and effective mediation practices that developed human potential and sustained human society. West Africa, in particular, was a place of advanced city states, with international trade and respected institutions of higher learning. In addition, Africa was the home to less centrally structured societies, governed by clans, chiefs, councils and elders such as pastoralists, agriculturalists, hunter and gatherers and forest societies. African kingdoms from West Africa sent expeditions by sea to explore and trade with indigenous societies of South and Central America a thousand years before Europeans set out on the high seas; indeed, African civilizations flowered for ten thousand years before Europe set its sights on what it termed "the dark continent."

The broad changes in Africa started around 300 BC with the military invasions and conquest of the Egyptian Empire by Greece, and thereafter, the Roman Empire invasions of North Africa. This was followed by centuries of war between Christian and Muslim empires and conquests by one over the other in Europe, North Africa and parts of Asia, formalizing and defining the relationships between Christianity and Islam with their counterpart nation states. The Western European Christian empires eventually broke in two, Spain, Portugal, Italy and France owing their allegiances to the Roman popes while England, Germany, Holland and Belgium forming their own religious sects known generally as the Protestants. England, the most powerful of the four, formed its own

state-based church, the Church of England, which became known as the Anglicans. Organized religious movements led by foreigners and in partnership with foreign companies and armed forces did not come to Africa to solve problems, improve lives or save souls. They came as part of foreign government designs to militarily defeat or, capitalizing on the weaknesses within certain kingdoms or clans, control the politics of sovereign African kingdoms and societies. In so doing, they undermined African leadership and culture, brought the fear of a Supreme Being capable of casting “sinners” into eternal hell, and simultaneously, wound up owning a lot of African land. None of this was possible, of course, without the gun. In the case of Uganda, the Anglicans from England, the Catholics from France and Islamic groups from Egypt would impact on kingdoms and other societies in central and East Africa, utilizing military power, bribes, and divide and rule tactics against very different neighboring societies, forcing them to live under the rule of one nation which would become British colonial Uganda.

What made the colonization of Africa by European nations easy to achieve, despite early resistance, was five hundred years of race-based slave trading. Prior to formal European and American designs on colonial rule of Africa which started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and formalized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European powers and later the United States instituted large scale race-based slave trading throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Initiated by the Portuguese and Spanish Empires in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to provide free labor for their plantation and empire building in the Western Hemisphere, slave trading in Africa was soon picked up by the British, French and later the United States. Arab nations were also involved in sub-Saharan slave trading, but their impact on damaging African society was less than Western slavery. European and American chattel slave trading, on the other hand, changed the course of Africa from a progression of kingdoms and flowering civilizations to a continent terrorized by racist slave trading which co-opted African leadership, drained the continent of tens of millions of its youngest people and set in motion the next phase of destruction, colonialism.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about a continued industrial revolution in Europe, the abolition of the slave trade in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and the Berlin Conference in 1884-85 which formally divided up sovereign African kingdoms and clan-led societies into nation state model European colonies. The driving force behind the Berlin Conference was financial gain – the acquisition of land, natural resources, land and cheap labor, and the expansion of markets for European manufactured goods. Not surprisingly, the Christian churches played a huge role in the process, bringing the Bible and partisan politics while the European nations brought armed militaries to invade and conquer. Public/private ventures financed the invasions, leading the way for the takeover of lands and resources by foreign mining, textile, timber, agricultural and cash crop companies. In the course of the colonizing process, European powers used well trained and well armed militaries to back up a tax system which was insidiously imposed on huts and cattle to force African people to work cheaply on European plantations to come up with the cash. Those who refused to pay taxes were considered squatters and their land and cattle were confiscated. This tax system was a means of dispossessing African people from their land while at the same time, acquiring cheap labor to extract natural resources in the mines and forests and harvest cash crops such as coffee, tea, cotton, rubber, tobacco and sugar on the plantations.

To prevent African people of different backgrounds and ethnic groups from unifying in resistance, “divide and rule” practices were used, pitting one group against another. There was always the most favored group, such as the Tutsis in Rwanda and Igbos in

Nigeria. Colonial powers oftentimes selected the favored group based on lightness of skin color, or size, or perceived circumstances. Sometimes, the favored group was first forced to cooperate with the colonial power, to prove its loyalty or demonstrate compliance. Almost always, colonial powers used racial stereotypes to select favored groups, or forced them to commit acts against other groups they would otherwise not have committed, such as joining a colonial armed force to invade a neighboring nation, or harass an occupied people. Divide and rule created anger and ultimately deep-seated hatred by the groups not in favor – the groups who lost most of their political and economic power – over the favored groups, who benefited the most politically and economically. After independence, the groups marginalized by colonialism often experienced similar marginalization from ruling parties of newly independent African nations. Indeed, in many instances, and certainly in the case of Uganda, departing colonial regimes played a large role in determining which ethnically-identified political party would take over power. This is because the departing colonial power was bowing out politically but intended on maintaining economic footholds in the nation and strategic influence in the region. Hence, marginalized ethnic groups oftentimes suffered worse repression from independent governments, leading to breakaway or rebel forces, inevitably resulting in ruling governments sending in the armies to crush “dissidents,” or “rebels.” This is the story of Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Liberia and many other places. It is also Uganda’s story.

## **History of Uganda**

The history of Uganda is complex but needs to be understood, both within the larger paradigms of colonialism in Africa and within its own specificity in order to search for and support lasting solutions to the current war in the north. This is because the current war in Northern Uganda flows from the long series of conflict and violent political struggles that has characterized Uganda’s colonial and post-colonial experiences. The search for lasting solutions to this war must encompass the unresolved grievances of these inter-related conflicts. The following does not intend to represent a full history of Uganda and its people, but is intended to highlight Uganda’s colonial and post-colonial political history which has led to the current war in Northern Uganda.

What is now present day Uganda was composed of advanced kingdoms and dynasties before the Europeans and Arabs appeared in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to kingdoms were decentralized chief and clan led societies in which land was owned communally. Among the kingdoms were the Bunyoro, Toro, Ankole, Busoga and Buganda, from which the name Uganda was derived. Clan and chief led groups included the Iteso, Karimojong, Bakiga, Langi, Lugbara and Acholi. The major difference between how kingdoms and clan led societies governed is that under kingdoms, power was centralized under a king who administered powers through local chiefs. Chief and clan led societies were decentralized, with consensus-driven leadership exercised at the village and clan levels.

Foreigners did not arrive in what is now Uganda until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The British arrived in the 1860’s, following the appearance of Arab traders twenty years earlier. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, linking Europe and the Mediterranean to central and East Africa through the Red Sea and the Nile accelerated European exploitation of Africa for its resources and potential markets and soon England, France, Belgium and Germany were competing for power in the Great Lakes Region. Egypt was also vying for economic

and political domination in the region but by 1890, this power was solidly under European control.

The first major intrusion into local affairs was through England's Henry M. Stanley, a white supremacist who led Buganda's Kabaka (King) Mutesa to believe the British would assist the Buganda Kingdom with guns and military partnership to defend against the Kingdom of Bunyoro and Egyptian aggression. Stanley persuaded Kabaka Mutesa to invite Christian missionaries to Buganda, and to be open to a larger British presence. Mutesa wrote a letter of invitation, which Stanley had published in the British press. This drove public and private expectations for increased British influence in the Buganda kingdom, with plans for economic exploitation.

In 1877, missionaries from the British Protestant Missionary Society arrived in Buganda followed two years later by the French Roman Catholic White Fathers who competed with the British Protestants, much as Britain and France were locked in centuries-old competition for world power. At the same time, there was increasing Bugandan conversion to Islam, which started before the Christians arrived, including within Kabaka Mutesa's court. Kabaka Mutesa himself observed Islamic traditions and learned to read the Koran although he never converted to Islam and felt threatened by the younger members of his court who did. The arrival of two Christian groups competing against each other and against Islam created confusion and conflict within Buganda society and in the kabaka's inner circle. Conversion to foreign religions, especially Western-style Christianity, undermined faith in and allegiance toward traditional leaders, and chiseled away at the ability of chiefs and clan heads to govern. By the late 1880's, a decade after the Christians had arrived, a new class of society had been created in Buganda, the "readers," who transformed their religious conversion into political power, and pressed for "democracy."

In 1884, Kabaka Mutesa died and his eighteen year old son Mwanga succeeded him. Kabaka Mwanga who distrusted the missionaries started persecuting the Christian leadership and demanded allegiance to the kingdom and traditional leaders. During the next several years, rivalries and armed conflict led to the ouster and reinstatement of Kabaka Mwanga three times as religious and political groups – British Protestants, French Catholics, Muslims loyal to Egypt, and German company agents east of the Buganda kingdom – armed or supported one kingdom and group over the other in pursuit of religious, economic and political dominance. By 1890, when Kabaka Mwanga was once again restored to power, he was little more than a figurehead for European interests. By this time, too, the kabakas were seen as instruments of the Catholic fathers, who represented French interests. This increased bitterness between Protestants and Catholics as the rivalries and hatreds of Europe were now played out on the African stage.

In 1884-85, Western European powers with designs on economic exploitation and increased global influence participated in the Berlin Conference which divided Africa into European colonies. England claimed what is now Uganda and Kenya but became alarmed over potential German influence within the Buganda kingdom when, in 1889, Kabaka Mwanga signed a friendship treaty with the Germans. The British and Germans signed an agreement in 1890, giving Britain full rights to Uganda while the Germans were given Heligoland, an island in the North Sea. Later that year, the British granted a charter and provided a military force to the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) under the command of Captain Frederick Lugard which arrived in Uganda to consolidate

Britain's power and authority over Uganda both structurally and by force. By 1892, Lugard's forces had defeated a final invasion of Muslim forces from Egypt, which had designs on establishing an empire in the region, defeated the French Catholic factions and reinstated Kabaka Mwanga to ceremonially head the Buganda Kingdom under British rule. Britain forced an agreement dividing the land up amongst religious/political factions, giving the Protestant (British) factions the most land and power, and the remainder to Catholic and Muslim groups. In 1894, Britain declared Uganda a "British Protectorate."

There would be resistance movements thereafter, but always put down by the British or those whom the British now controlled. In 1900, weakened Buganda officials signed The Buganda Agreement with England, agreeing to subordinate all of their authority to the Protectorate. A new land tenure system was put in place, creating individual rather than kingdom allocated land. Hut taxes were imposed to force payment in British currency, destroying the bartering system and forcing cash payments to finance the Protectorate that was destroying indigenous values. Although the British had focused their attention on controlling the Buganda Kingdom first, they took control over all the kingdoms and clan led societies in present day Uganda, including Langi and Acholi by military conquest and the installation of puppet chiefs to employ British interests in Eastern Uganda. These compliant, Protestant puppet chiefs were given large tracts of land. They became landlords and charged exorbitant rent to those who had occupied their ancestral lands for generations. Some of the chiefs were deployed to impose British rule outside their own regions. Instead of fostering a common Ugandan identity, Britain accelerated divide and rule tactics, creating education systems which excluded Muslims and failed to develop a skilled or merchant class, favoring people from Buganda with civil service positions and forcing Acholi and Langi people into the army. The new religions became dividing lines which took on opposing political identities, further eroding cultural identities and the potential for unity. The British divided Uganda into tribal districts, ruled by a British colonial governor, with districts having no local political interaction. These well-conceived divide and rule strategies and tactics would prevent Ugandans from having a common national identity. Furthermore, an Asian merchant class from mostly India and Pakistan was invited to Uganda, became British citizens, acquired land and wealth and controlled much of the trade and business.

All in all, Britain ruled Uganda in ways to ensure the people would stay divided. It used violence to expand its territory outside the Buganda kingdom, especially in the North and East. This created anger against the people of Buganda, especially by the people in the north who saw Buganda as ruling them through Britain. Britain had also divided Uganda into economic zones, some regions designated for cash crops, others as reserves for cheap labor. Especially by excluding the civil service to all but people in Buganda, building an army of northerners, mostly Acholi and Langi, deciding who would be educated and who would not and building a merchant class among the Asian community, Britain created the foundation for a society in conflict with itself. Seeds of hatred and the quest for revenge were sown during the colonial era, and would continue after independence. People were divided along religious, ethnic, political, regional and class lines. The aim was to divide, so that Britain could rule. Britain's ultimate aim was to control the trade and resources of its colonies and maintain political and military influence on a regional and global scale. Uganda, the colony was simply a means to an end and when independence would come, Uganda the nation would be too divided to unite.

In the 1920's and 1930's, there were various resistance movements against British rule and Asian economic domination. However, these movements were mostly localized, never able to gain national momentum and easily suppressed by the British military. Sometimes, to appease local resistance, the colonial government gave in to some demands, including reducing the power of puppet chiefs. In response to resistance, the British consolidated their power, reduced the power of the Buganda kingdom and used one group and class against the other. The colonial government was officially ruled through a Legislative Council, established in 1921, composed of non-African members.

The winds of change were sweeping across Africa in the 1950's. Colonized African states were agitating for independence. The British colony of Gold Coast in West Africa became independent Ghana in 1957. In the 1950's, Britain also agreed to include African members on the Legislative Council in Uganda. These members were well selected to ensure their loyalty to the British crown. In 1953, Kabaka Mutesa II was deported for his lack of loyalty to the crown.

As independence movements grew throughout the continent, political parties and movements began to emerge in Uganda. In 1952, the Uganda National Congress (UNC) formed as an effort to seek economic equality and a national political voice. The UNC attempted to bring in groups from around Uganda, including from Acholi, Lango, and Teso. Uganda was too fractured, however, and it was difficult to unite people around national issues. In addition, the UNC was Protestant dominated, alienating non-Protestants. The Uganda People's Union (UPU) organized in 1958. UPU consciously tried to avoid religious affiliations and some of its leadership was composed of the Uganda Legislative Council agitating for change. Efforts were made to recruit constituents from Buganda but it feared Catholic domination. In 1956, the Democratic Party (DP) was born. The DP was a mostly Roman Catholic constituency, and formed to advance the cause of Catholics marginalized by the dominant Protestant powers. Later, in 1961, the Kabaka Yekka (KY) party would be organized by Buganda traditionalists to protect Buganda traditions and the role of the kabaka.

In 1959, the UNC split into two, a Buganda faction and non-Buganda faction. The latter was led by Milton Obote, a member of the Legislative Council from Lango. In order to form a larger power base, the Obote faction merged with the UPU to form the Uganda People's Congress (UPC). Obote was selected its leader.

Britain utilized various exit strategies for its direct and "indirect" rule in its colonies. In West Africa, Britain tried to sabotage and eventually maneuvered behind the scenes to try to influence who would lead post-colonial Ghana., eventually acceding to the new leadership. In Kenya, however, Britain resisted and fought a liberation movement. In India, a nonviolent peace movement led by Mohatma Gandhi eventually forced an embarrassed Britain to leave in shame. In Uganda, Britain's exit strategy was to go along with the rising calls for self rule, hoping to manipulate behind the scenes and benefit from its economic foothold. The UPC and KY formed a campaign coalition in anticipation of the 1962 Independent elections, leading to Milton Obote becoming the Executive Prime Minister and Kabaka Mutesa II the ceremonial head of state. Buganda also maintained a large measure of autonomy from the central government. In 1966, Obote introduced a constitution which removed most of Buganda's autonomy and forced Kabaka Mutesa into exile. The next year, a new constitution gave the central government more power; Buganda was divided into four districts and the tensions between Buganda

and the central government, led by the Northern Langi leader, heightened. In many ways, Obote was utilizing divide and rule tactics as the British had previously done.

Obote's rule became increasingly brutal and autocratic, and went on until 1971 when he was ousted by Major General Idi Amin. This was during the height of the Cold War and there is evidence that US and British military agencies provided military shipments and training to Amin to support the coup. Obote was perceived as a leftist supporting pan African liberation movements supported by the Soviet Union and China and the U.S. and Britain felt they could manipulate Amin.

Like Obote, Amin engaged in divide and rule tactics, befriending Buganda and turning against Lango and Acholi. Amin purged the army of Acholi and Langi members, then had many former Acholi and Langi army members slaughtered. He moved against the Acholi and Langi civilian communities, detaining and murdering many who were prominent and the most educated. Amin installed new army members from the West Nile, appointed members from the South to key government positions and kept the animosity going between north and south. It was the slaughter of the Acholi and Langi community, in which possibly several hundred thousands were killed, which accelerated the dynamics which would later lead to the current war in Northern Uganda. Amin maintained popularity with many people, though, by ousting the Asian community, most of whom were British citizens, confiscating their land. Declaring himself president for life, Amin started claiming part of Kenya and Tanzania for Uganda, giving Tanzania the excuse to intervene and oust Amin. In 1979, a coalition force of Amin's enemies, mostly exiled Acholi and Langi and Yoweri Museveni's Front for National Salvation (FRONASA) and the Tanzanian army invaded from Tanzania and overthrew Amin, who fled into exile.

New elections were organized in 1980 and Obote's Uganda People's Congress (UPC) won, but widespread violence and perceived voting irregularities and continued repression of the Acholi and Langi communities led to a challenge by the Democratic Party (DP) and Museveni. A coalition of forces, Museveni's reformed National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A), the Uganda Freedom Movement/Army (UFM/A), and the Uganda Freedom Fighters moved against Obote's government. They were supported by the West Nile's Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) and the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA).

Fighting was countrywide but most concentrated in the Luwero Triangle. There were many atrocities during this period, especially against the Buganda population which was perceived as supporting opposition groups and for their previous support of Amin. These murders and tortures were attributed to Acholi members of the army, which the Acholi disputed. These accusations, however, would further fuel animosity between Acholi and other groups.

In 1985, conflicts between Acholi and Langi members of the military precipitated a coup and the second ouster of Obote, bringing General Tito Okello from Acholi to power. This ended the military alliance between Acholi and Langi, setting the scene for Acholi/Langi conflict. In addition to this conflict, the main conflict in Uganda was now between Okello's government and Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) which had a base in the West and increasing support in the South. Negotiations between the Okello government and the NRA took place in Nairobi in 1985, officiated by Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi, but the agreement never held, and NRA pressed on. It was also alleged

that the Okello government perpetrated mass atrocities against civilians in order to suppress support for the NRA. NRA support grew around the country and in January, 1986, the NRA reached Kampala and overthrew the government, forcing Okello to flee north to Sudan. A new government was organized and Museveni declared president. For the first time, both political and military power was situated in the south.

## **The Current War**

The current war, although 18 years in duration, must be seen in context of Uganda's ongoing violent post-colonial history and divide and rule tactics born during the colonial era and continued after independence. When President Museveni came to power in 1986, there is evidence he tried to bring together a wide range of people and individuals from all regions, ethnic, political and religious groups to form a government of national unity. At the same time, although the Acholi community had accepted the NRA seizure of power, and the new National Resistance Movement government headed by Museveni, the government was seen by the Acholi people as stepping up anti-northern sentiment and later in the year, the national army (NRA) is alleged to have escalated tensions by committing atrocities in Acholiland under the guise of putting down a growing rebellion. This included alleged killings, rape, torture, abductions, confiscation of livestock and destruction of local agricultural, education and health infrastructure. Some rationalized that this was in revenge for the Luwero atrocities, alleged against Acholi soldiers.

Despite the anger at human atrocities, the alleged role of the NRA in confiscating cattle and collaborating with raids from Karamajong (Uganda) cattle raiders, cut deeply into the Acholi economy. Cattle and smaller livestock has always represented the wealth in Acholi culture and substituted for a cash economy. Cattle in particular was used to accumulate wealth, pay for educations, tide over families during drought, used for marriage payments and served as inheritance. Between 1985 and 1997, it is estimated, the cattle herds in Acholi were reduced from approximately 300,000 to 5,000, toppling the pastoral-based economy and hence, damaging Acholi culture and its social fabric. The worst raids occurred in 1987 when an organized force of Karamajong cattle raiders swept through Kitgum and Gulu and confiscated the vast majority of Acholi livestock. There was evidence and allegations of NRA collusion and participation. There was also evidence that some Acholi cattle were given, loaned or sold to the UPDA, some of which may have been sold for arms and munitions. The stripping of cattle and livestock from Acholi was a severe blow to a people who relied on cattle and livestock to live. Once again, conflict was escalating in Uganda.

When the government, in May 1986 ordered all soldiers to barracks, which included soldiers from Acholi, this recalled the massacres of Acholi soldiers under the Amin regime and many Acholi government soldiers went into hiding. Others fled to Sudan while still others may have taken up arms.. To complicate matters further, the Uganda government was supporting the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in southern Sudan, which attacked Acholi refugees as an act of solidarity with the Ugandan government. Armed Acholi groups formed to defend against the fear of increased government repression, including the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Mobile Forces/Movement (HSMF/HSM), the Severino Lukoya's Lord's Army and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). While some of these forces, such as UPDA formed to defend against the NRA and government policies, other forces were

based on “holy spirit messengers,” aimed at founding a government based on religious principles and to cleanse Acholi society of the “impure.”

Alice Lakwena’s Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) led thousands of Acholis into battle, believing oils rubbed on their chest would protect them from bullets. Eventually, the Holy Spirit Movement was defeated and Alice Lawena went into exile in Kenya. The UPDA signed a peace agreement with the NRA. Severino, the father of Alice Lakwena, tried to assume leadership of the Holy Spirit Movement but was not a popular figure. When he failed to motivate the population as Lakwena had done, he turned to attacking children, as Kony would later do, to sustain the movement. Without popular appeal, however, the Severino movement disbanded. Eventually, one army was left, Lord’s Resistance Army, led by Joseph Kony, a former UPDA commander and Lakwena’s nephew.

### **Lord’s Resistance Army**

For the past eighteen years, Joseph Kony-led Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) has waged a war in mostly Northern Uganda that has murdered, by current estimates, 30,000 people, abducted 20,000-30,000 children who have been forced to conduct most of the atrocities and have caused war related deaths from injury and disease that number several hundred thousand.

LRA was organized to violently overthrow the government of Uganda. In that sense, LRA is a rebel force and every government has the right to defend against violent overthrows. In the early years, LRA had popular support and spread a vision of overthrowing the Museveni government, restoring the Acholi community to its rightful political place and administering a religious society according to the Ten Commandments. Kony claimed to be seized by the Holy Spirit, found his visions in dreams, had a direct link with God and the power to protect his combatant forces from harm. With the mass removals of cattle and livestock in Acholi, the continued fear of massacres in Acholi by the NRA and the perceived threat of further government repression, there was, initially, widespread support of LRA. Religious leaders gave Kony and his commanders their official blessings, and for some, LRA recaptured the mystical support Alice Lakwena had brought to youth.

It did not take long, however, for Kony and his commanders to start victimizing Acholi, largely because he found it difficult to recruit Acholi youth as soldiers. Independently, he may have also believed that the Acholi people needed to suffer, redeem their sins and become pure. There are, in fact, many versions of Joseph Kony, what he believes and what motivates him. For some time, there was evidence that this self-styled Christian mystic converted to Islam, a useful conversion if he did, since LRA has been based in Southern Sudan and until recently, supported by the Islamic Khartoum government.

It is generally believed that as Kony found it difficult to rally popular support in Acholi, LRA started abducting Acholi children to become his army. He did this, it is believed, not only to raise and maintain an army, but to punish the Acholi community for not supporting his movement. This became even more apparent as Acholi people sought and increasingly relied upon the Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF), to guarantee their safety. In a short period of time, LRA became an army of abducted children, girls and boys, led by adult male commanders. While the stated aim of LRA was to redeem the

Acholi community and overthrow a repressive government, in fact LRA was victimizing the Acholi community. Except for short periods of time when LRA attacked in Teso and Langi, LRA has restricted its rebellion and strategies in Acholi and against Acholi people.

Some believe that Kony and his senior commanders have become entrenched warlords, profiting from their role as an army that can commit atrocities not only in Uganda but in Sudan, and potentially, on a regional basis. The various sides of decades- long wars in Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo use proxy and rebel armies to augment their regular armies. Unlike many armies, LRA does not have huge labor costs. Children constitute 90% of its army, and children do not have to be paid. A small cadre of loyal commanders receive the power and wealth that drives them, and the other “benefits” of commanding obedient children, not least of which includes “marrying” abducted girls. Whereas many armies need high powered and advanced weaponry – which LRA has been known to have – child soldiers do not ordinarily carry guns. Pangas (machetes), hatchets, axes and knives are their weapon. The costs remain low and the population remains terrorized. Whereas no one wants to die from being shot, people in general are terrorized at being hacked to death, or having one’s legs or arms chopped off. It is this terror that keeps LRA such a formidable force, one which frightens the UPDF as well as the civilian population.

In short, LRA is a terror organization out of control, with no clear political or other rational objectives. It terrorizes and traumatizes the very people it claims to protect, and is largely responsible for the condition of the Acholi people today. LRA uses violence, fear and terror to achieve its objectives, and its very existence and continuing raids, more than any other factor, is the chief obstacle to peace in Northern Uganda.

### **Operation Iron Fist and the rise of IDP Camps**

Between 1986 and 1996, LRA attacks on villages, with massive abductions, killings, rapes and mutilations, led to the displacement of thousands of mostly Acholi people. In 1996, the government built and ordered large numbers of people from the north into the IDP camps, stated by the government as a means of protecting northern district communities from LRA raids and also, to weaken civilian support of LRA. By 1997, there were approximately 500,000 Acholi people living in IDP camps. In 2002, the UPDF launched “Operation Iron Fist” which permitted government forces to enter Southern Sudan to attack LRA where they have been based for years. However, by all accounts, this pushed more LRA units into Northern Uganda, resulting in tripling the numbers of Acholi people forced into IDP camps. Most estimates indicate more than 1.6 million people – 80% of the Acholi population – are confined to IDP camps in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts in Northern Uganda. The conditions under which the vast majority of Acholi people live in Uganda, and all who live in IDP camps and resettlement communities, is a gross violation of human rights. Furthermore, these conditions are destroying Acholi culture and limiting the options for Acholi people to restore their pastoral and agricultural-based economy and culture.

## **The Search for Solutions**

Peace Builders, human rights activists, development and relief organizations, religious organizations, regional and international organizations and others concerned may wish to consider learning about and supporting initiatives in the following three areas:

1. Negotiations between the Government of Uganda (GoU) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).
2. Reconciling Uganda society among its various political, ethnic, religious, regional and other sectors that historically have been used to divide society. Reconciliation could include various tools of learning and discussion, conflict resolution, traditional reconciliation, traditional healing, and other peace building tools and practices.
3. Addressing the immediate human rights needs of almost two million, mostly Acholi people suffering in IDP camps, resettlement communities and in urban areas.

## **The following events will be helpful to consider in supporting the peace building and negotiations process:**

1. The Government of Uganda has enacted and extended an Amnesty Act, in which LRA soldiers, including abducted children, long serving rebel soldiers and commanders may surrender and participate in rehabilitation, restoration and reintegration into society without fear of prosecution or government persecution. This is also part of a "Come Back Home" campaign led by the Acholi community with government support. On July 13, 2004, LRA senior commander Kenneth Banya, age 70, was captured in Gulu by the UPDF. This is a significant event because Banya has stated publicly that other LRA commanders should surrender and that President Yoweri Museveni was an honorable man. Banya, in fact, is a former army major and body guard of Museveni when he was a minister in the second Obote government and is one of a number of former army commanders who joined LRA in the 1980's. His apparent dignified treatment by the Government of Uganda has spurred optimism that other commanders will surrender, weakening Kony's ability to lead. While other commanders have surrendered, and some rebel forces have taken advantage of Amnesty, the numbers are lower than previously anticipated.
2. The Government of Uganda continues to support and fund a formal negotiations process, led by the Honorable Betty Bigombe, a former minister and now in charge of coordinating and leading the negotiation process.
3. In addition to the government's negotiation team, the Lord's Resistance Army apparently has a seven-man peace team assigned by Joseph Kony to negotiate with the Government of Uganda. On January 24, 2005, the UPDF captured LRA senior commander Odong Michael Acelam who was part of the LRA peace team. See: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200501240156.html>

4. The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), an ecumenical Catholic, Protestant and Muslim religious leaders group based in Northern Uganda have created an active dialogue about ending the war, works closely with the Government of Uganda and the Acholi community and continues to work patiently and steadfastly to help negotiate an end to the LRA war.
5. The government declared a cease fire in December, which was to lead to talks about a truce and permanent cease fire. There were also supposed to be a formal negotiation session between the Government and LRA. LRA, however, failed to appear at the negotiations and broke the ceasefire with a raid. However, there continues to be efforts by Ms. Betty Bigombe to arrange further talks.
6. There have been attempted peace negotiations in past years and hopes were raised. However, with the recent peace accord signed between the Khartoum government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the LRA may not be receiving support from the Khartoum government and may lose its base in Southern Sudan. Therefore, LRA's overall position and support may be weakened. On the other hand, there is also speculation that rogue elements of the Sudanese army may continue to support Kony, since military commanders in this region also have local realms of corruption and income generation through thievery, criminal gangs, land grabbing, cattle rustling and arms dealing.
7. Although Joseph Kony is the longtime leader of LRA, there may be more than one faction of LRA. Therefore, negotiating with Kony alone may or may not lead to disbandment of the entire LRA. Likewise, negotiating with senior commanders of LRA factions may, on a piecemeal basis, start to dismantle LRA.
8. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is investigating war crimes violations resulting from the 18 year war in Northern Uganda. Their mandate is to investigate all war crimes, against all possible parties, and it is likely that once this investigation is completed, it may indict Joseph Kony. The ICC is a new entity of the United Nations, and only applies to crimes committed after 2002. However, if Kony is indicted, he would no longer be able to take advantage of amnesty under the Amnesty Act, as ICC indictments take precedence over national amnesty acts. The Acholi community in general prefers reconciliation of LRA war crimes, rather than criminal prosecutions. If Kony is indicted, this will send a message that war crimes will not be tolerated, and that acts of inhumanity cannot continue unpunished or with impunity. On the other hand, if Kony is indicted, this may make it difficult for the Government of Uganda to negotiate with Kony or senior LRA commanders as there will be little to offer in terms of protection from prosecution. It is possible the parties and the ICC may devise a creative approach to this possible dilemma.
9. Uganda's colonial and post colonial political history has utilized violence as a means toward seeking and maintaining political power, and access to political power has always been equated with benefits and protection from opposing factions. All of society in Uganda will benefit by learning about the power of non violence as a positive force for individual and community transformation, and the practices of non violence as tactics and strategies that bring about positive social change. Supporting initiatives which teach about the powers and practices of non

violence, including mediation, conflict resolution and traditional reconciliation will help to build a society with more options than violence.

### **What We Can Do:**

There are many things we as civil society, peace and justice, peace building, human rights, education, community, relief and development and grassroots organizations can do to help build peace in Uganda and help to alleviate the extreme suffering of millions of mostly women and children affected by the war. By addressing the root causes and helping to end this war, we are also working to end child soldiering in Uganda, since the continuation of this war and child soldiering go hand in hand.

The following areas are points of consideration and action to help support peace and justice in Uganda:

1. Support Uganda, regional and international initiatives which build *trust* between all segments of society in Uganda. Generations of colonial and post colonial divide and rule tactics, and the use of violence by one group against another created a sense of fear and anger between different segments of Uganda society. Building trust and understanding is an essential aspect of reconciling Uganda society and ending conflict, including this conflict in Northern Uganda, once and for all.
2. Support initiatives which build a national identity. Most people in Uganda identify with their ethnic group or region first, and as a citizen of Uganda second. Helping to foster a “We are all Ugandans” atmosphere will help to build trust and unity in Uganda society.
3. Support initiatives which build on the strengths of Uganda society. Despite all Uganda has been through since the colonial era, and the violence of post-colonial regimes, Uganda society has many strengths. As a whole, people in Uganda are hard working. Uganda is also a kinship based society, and extended, surrogate and care-giving family life is strong and nurturing. Uganda is a caring, compassionate society. Culturally, many segments of society in Uganda believe in reconciliation, and no segment of society opposes reconciliation. Uganda society is highly educated, formally in many sectors, and through cultural, indigenous, experiential and practical knowledge in other sectors. Uganda society is rich in culture, both deep and surface culture, and despite all Uganda has been through, Uganda is a resilient society.
4. Support initiatives which bring people together and do not condemn one side or the other. Condemning the Government of Uganda, for instance, is counter productive and does not lead to building a peaceful, reconciled, trusting society. Encouraging the Government of Uganda to initiate, participate in and support endeavors which build trust and reconcile society are helpful ways to work with the Government of Uganda. Helping to support the positive achievements of the Government, such as with progressive and cutting edge HIV/AIDs policies and programs, is an example of common ground areas

peace builders and justice advocates can relate to and work with the Government. Engaging in dialogue with the government, and supporting local and national government economic development and community building programs is another constructive way to work with the Government. In other words, building positive, honest relationship with local and national government officials, and making contributions to positive government programs can help to build friendship and understanding between international friends and the Government. This will, in both the short and long term, help to build a peaceful and just Uganda.

5. Advocate for and contribute to the urgent humanitarian needs in Northern Uganda, mostly in IDP camps but also other resettlement communities. This includes the need for food and food supplements beyond what the World Food Program is providing; the need for fresh and adequate supplies of water; the need for medical and health care, sanitation and hygiene supplies; the need for counseling and clinical support; vocational and entrepreneurship training and projects; education programs; HIV/AIDS programs, family planning and women's reproductive health services; rehabilitation centers which focus on the psycho-social needs of former child soldiers, former abductees, women and all people who have been affected by the war; peace building programs, conflict resolution training, arts and culture programs, sports and recreation programs, income generating activities. *The ways to do this include supporting grassroots organizations, national programs and international NGO's and agencies which are providing these services. Others ways to help includes joining volunteer organizations which are working in Northern Uganda to make a difference, such as Medicines Sans Frontier (MSF), and other "Without Borders" groups helping local communities in Uganda invite them to help (Engineers Without Borders, for instance, and others).*
6. Understand the role violence has played in the colonial and post colonial history of Uganda, including this current war in Northern Uganda, and support organizations, projects and initiatives which foster non violence through learning and practice. This includes non violent tools to address, resolve and manage conflict without resorting to violence, such as conflict resolution, mediation, and traditional reconciliation. Support peace building initiatives which utilize non violent strategies, tactics and conflict resolution tools.
7. Support peace building initiatives which bring all members of Uganda society into the peace building and humanitarian needs of the Acholi community in Uganda. It is good for international organizations to help Uganda end this war and ameliorate the humanitarian crisis. It is critical that all of Uganda society as a whole contribute to peace building and humanitarian needs as well. This will help to reconcile, build trust and bring healing to all segments of society.
8. Profile the war, child soldiering and condition of IDP camps internationally, engaging international and regional forums (such as the Africa Union and United Nations), government officials and structures throughout the world, religious, NGO, community and communications/media organizations to

devote urgent attention and contribution to the peace building and humanitarian needs in Uganda.

9. Bring the same level of compassion, caring and energy to the people affected by war in Northern Uganda as the world community has brought to the people affected by the tsunami in Asia.
10. Support efforts to alleviate the Uganda economy from unnecessary burdens, such as external debt. A disproportionate percentage of Uganda's revenue is devoted to paying multilateral debt to major Western international financial institutions, depriving the Government of Uganda and Uganda society from benefiting fully from Uganda's progressive HIV/AIDS programs, education system and growing economy.
11. Visit Uganda. Visit grassroots and other initiatives which are addressing health, education, vocational training, humanitarian and peace building needs. Partner with schools, grassroots organizations and communities. Patronize Uganda's tourist industry and enjoy Uganda's natural beauty. Learn from Ugandan society on your visit how the regional and international community can help contribute to improving Uganda society, ending the war and addressing humanitarian needs.

**For more information, visit other sections on our site that provide information about peace building, development and human rights, campaigns, reports and news sources.**