

Uganda

Community Resilience and Dialogue

Implementing Partner: A consortium led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with Association of Volunteers in Service International (AVSI), CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children in Uganda

Funding Period: September 2002 - August 2007

Amount: \$3,305,000

Purpose: Strengthen the prospects for stability through comprehensive treatment services in areas severely affected by destabilizing insurgent forces.

Objectives:

- Provide counseling and treatment services at reception centers for formerly abducted children and victims of torture; assist their re-integration within families and communities
- Strengthen support mechanisms and networks within communities to address the needs of victims of torture
- Treat war- and torture-affected communities to avoid stigmatization of victims
- Coordinate with key local government structures and partner with Ugandan NGOs and civil society
- Advocate on behalf of victims and raise the level of local and international public awareness about the Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) and Allied Democratic Forces' (ADF) abduction of children and use of child soldiers
- Document human rights abuses in affected districts and provide legal assistance to those victimized by the LRA, ADF, or others
- Document and share lessons learned and best practices

Accomplishments:

- Fed, clothed, accommodated, medically screened, and provided psychosocial rehabilitation to 7,010 formerly abducted children, adult returnees, and victims of torture in four reception centers in northern and western Uganda
- Reunited with their families 5,741 formerly abducted children, adult returnees, and victims of torture in northern and western Uganda, including refugee victims of ethnic warfare in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
- Organized community sensitization, mobilization and dialogue programs on psychosocial and protections issues reaching 37,403 people
- Trained 3,712 Ugandan teachers and vocational instructors in psychosocial issues, child rights, and improved class management
- Enrolled 4,519 formerly abducted children, adult returnees, orphans, and vulnerable children, and victims of torture in remedial and vocational education and apprenticeship programs

- Improved the technical capacity of 2,708 local partner staff and volunteers, including district officials, community volunteers, and reception center staff
- Provided economic development support activities for sustainable livelihoods to 16,760 formerly abducted children, adult returnees, orphans, vulnerable children, victims of torture, and internally displaced populations
- Promoted and supported peer support groups for 9,177 out-of-school youth
- Facilitated key Ugandan and East African regional working groups including the Uganda National Psychosocial Core Team, the Uganda Amnesty Commission Sub-Committee on Reception Center Minimum Standards, and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Since late 1987, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been terrorizing the inhabitants of northern Uganda, notably in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader. Noted for random and exceedingly brutal attacks, the LRA has avoided police or military force by conducting a campaign of terror against civilians. Abduction is common, especially of children who are used as guides, porters, or concubines. Those who try to escape or who outlive their usefulness are brutalized and often summarily executed. In June 2003 the LRA conflict expanded into the Lango and Teso subregions, causing mass displacement and terror to a population not previously targeted by the LRA. VTF responded with psychosocial programming and interventions to assist the abductees and victims of torture.

People living in the western Ugandan districts of Bundibugyo, Kasese, and Kabarole suffered similar abuses at the hands of the Allied Democratic Forces from 1996 through 2002. Formerly abducted children were beaten and suffered from trauma and girls were either forced into marriage at a young age or were raped, many experiencing early pregnancies without adequate care. Although the majority of the population has returned to their homes in these districts, CRD still supports psychosocial programming to address the trauma faced during the conflict.

Under present conditions of continued uncertainty and inadequate support, formerly abducted children who return to their families and communities are at risk for prolonged psychological trauma, damaging prospects for their future. VTF-supported activities help children and their families re-adjust and re-integrate with improved chances for regional security.