

NEWS FROM SACRED HEART SEMINARY ARCHDIOCESE OF GULU, UGANDA

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HOW MANY HAVE TO DIE? JUST TELL ME THE NUMBER

By: Peter Quaranto; Director of the Uganda Conflict Action Network
www.UgandaCan.org



Peter Quaranto-
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persisted for twenty years now.

In March of this year, I returned to Gulu to spend two weeks visiting the internally displaced people's (IDP) camps of northern Uganda. I had heard Ugandan government officials earlier say that "the war is over", however there are no signs of peace in northern Uganda. More than 1.7 million people remain confined to these IDP camps that are overcrowded, lacking health services and amenities, and protected only inconsistently. 1,000 people are dying each week in these camps. Behind each of these numbers is a face; most likely the face of a child tired and beaten by this war that has

If I learned anything from this trip, it is that the camps are a horrifically inadequate protection strategy. Initially designed by the government to "protect" the people of the north, these camps have become their demise. Recent plans to decongest the camps are inadequate half-measures; the people of northern Uganda need a plan for secure return now.

As I walked through the camps, I was reminded of a well-known passage from the Book of Genesis when the Lord asks Cain the location of his brother Abel. To which Cain responds, "I know not, Lord. Am I my brother's keeper?" Knowing the people of northern Uganda challenges me to a deeper understanding of this challenge. What does it mean to be "my brother's keeper" in northern Uganda?

A perspective of shared responsibility is clearly lacking. Even with such mortality rates, the Government of Uganda refuses to declare the region a disaster area. The United Nations Security Council in its own right remains silent. I want to know why. "Most parts in the north are not as insecure as portrayed. The problem is shrinking." claims President Yoweri Museveni. "Gulu has largely been free from terrorist activities. To declare the region a disaster area, what are you trying to achieve?" he asks. The Donor countries and the Security Council seem to accept this with little reservation. Even though the U. N. Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs declared this the world's worst neglected humanitarian crisis, the United Nations Security Council has remained largely silent.

So, we have one question: how many people have to die before the war in the north is treated as a priority for both the government of Uganda and the international community? Just tell us the number. Is it 250,000? 300,000? 500,000? Maybe it's a million? Is there a number that will ring the alarm bells? If not, what exactly are we waiting for? The question is ridiculous. More compelling though, is the answer.

At the World Summit in 2005, member countries of the United Nations unanimously endorsed the 'responsibility to protect'. In Article 139 of the Summit outcome document, the countries of the world affirmed that the international community has a responsibility to intervene when a state manifestly fails to protect its own population. Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, made that commitment very clear. "For the first time at this Summit we agree that states

do not have the right to do what they will within their own borders, but that we, in the name of humanity, have a common duty to protect people where their own government will not." If the 'responsibility to protect' means anything anywhere, it ought to mean something in northern Uganda. We're not pointing fingers; we're all responsible, and that's why we have to act.

Fortunately, after years of inaction, there is some momentum. Last October, 15,000 people in 38 cities around the world participated in GuluWalk to walk in solidarity with the children of northern Uganda. Thousands have written and called their elected officials, demanding that this crisis be made a priority. The Oprah Show recently aired a segment about the suffering of the children in northern Uganda. Finally, the Global Night Commute, organized by the filmmakers of the documentary Invisible Children, mobilized a historic 60,000 Americans to sleep outside to tell the story.

This grassroots mobilization has forced world leaders to act. On March 20th in Geneva, representatives from the Core donor countries (United States, United Kingdom, Norway, Netherlands and Canada) met with representatives of the Ugandan government to discuss a comprehensive plan for protection and peace. The Donors discussed support for strengthening protection, bolstering mediation and helping to arrest LRA leadership. The government responded with a new plan for security and humanitarian delivery. At the same time, the U. S. Congress has been active, passing a resolution on the issue and holding multiple hearings. The UN Security Council has passed two resolutions in 2006, which condemn LRA attacks and call on the UN Mission in Sudan to stop them.

These are hopeful developments, but so much more can be done to help end LRA activity, resettle IDP's with security and engage in a broad political process of reconciliation. Without the political will, the discussions unfolding will simply be politicking as usual and little will change. Unless of course we demand better. And we shall. Our declaration, together with the people we met in northern Uganda, is that the time has come for all of us to take responsibility - from the local to the international. On the local level, each of us from Kampala to California must stand in solidarity with the people of the north. You can get involved by signing up at www.UgandaCan.org and participating in the "Ten Things You Can Do Today to Help Northern Uganda."



Children at Pader Refugee Camp.

On the national level, the government should show stronger will to end this war and put forth a comprehensive peace plan. On the international level, the Donors and the Security Council must commit to more decisive action to end this war and the crisis in the camps.

Someone asked us when will we stop advocating and campaigning for peace in northern Uganda. There are only two ways we see that ever happening. First, when there is indeed peace. When the people of northern Uganda can leave the inhumane conditions of the IDP camps of their own free will and go home. Or, just tell us the number of people who need to die before someone is going to act with urgency. Tell us how many Acholi have to die for it to matter. When the number hits, we'll be sure to give you a call. **Absurd isn't it? I think so.**

FROM THE DESK OF MSGR. MATTHEW ODONG

Dear Friends in the risen Lord,

Prayers and cordial greetings to you from all of us here at Sacred Heart Seminary. The staff and seminarians join me in thanking you for your continued prayers and support to Sacred Heart Seminary and the Archdiocese of Gulu. As I have often said, life would not be as good as it is without support from our American friends. May Heaven reward you abundantly for your generous heart in sharing your love, spirituality and resources with us.

Your help continues to bear fruit. In a few weeks six of our young men shall be ordained deacons (scheduled for Sunday, June 25th); and four deacons shall be ordained priests in July. What a blessing from the Lord for the gift of these ten new pastors to His church. Please join us in a thanksgiving prayer for our new Deacons and Priests.

In this issue of our newsletter, my presentation is brief because of presentations by friends Peter Quaranto, Ruth Leacock and Mike Westerhaus' reports on work they are doing on our behalf. I think you will find their stories very informative.

Our people long to hear from their government and the international community words similar to the words Jesus said to the paralytic: "...get up, take up your mat and go home" (Lk5:24). Can we, collectively say to the people of northern Uganda what Jesus said to the paralytic? Yes, we can if there is the political will. I believe each one of us can do something in the direction of peace, reconstruction and economic rehabilitation.

ARCHBISHOP FLYNN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The construction work has been delayed by insecurity at the building site. I am happy to inform you that the following progress has been made:

- * Purchase of the land for construction of the school.
- * One well has been drilled to supply clean water.
- * Formation of the Board of Directors who will act as the school's policy making body to guide and advise the Archdiocese and donors of action necessary for the development of the school.
- * Encouraging the local people to get involved in the construction of the school and look at it as their school.

Our hope is that with the present relative peace in the Pader area and promises made to us by the recently elected District Local council leaders to station a military detachment at the site to provide security, we look forward to beginning the construction work soon. We see the school as one of the most important projects in the rehabilitation of our people's lives after the war. Education is the solution to poverty, ignorance, conflict, illiteracy, hunger and underdevelopment. To educate is to build capacity and empower people for transformation of our society.

Thank you for seeing Christ in the sufferings and needs of the people of northern Uganda. May your Love ever be inspired by the words of Jesus to His disciples: "...For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me" (Mt25:35-36).

Peace and blessings to you always.

Your friend,



Msgr. Matthew Odong
Rector

EYES TOWARD GULU

By: Ruth Scherer Leacock - Co-founder Computers for Africa
www.computers4africa.org

Early 2006 found me making two trips to northern Uganda. Gulu is isolated from the rest of the country by a history of violence, terror and abduction that has built impenetrable borders of fear. Even though the city of Gulu is now relatively safe, few citizens from the capital city, Kampala, breach the divide to visit the area with its tragic 20-year history of war. The North is "a country within a country," a place unto its own.

Husband Tim and I arrived in Uganda in October 2004, hearts full, hopes high, on mission to serve a gracious God by serving the rural poor of Uganda. We came to establish an on-the-ground operation for the Omaha-based non-profit, Computers for Africa, we founded two years earlier. With the help of missionary Tony Wach, S.J., we pretty much hit the ground running. Just eighteen months after we arrived, we were close to completing our goals. Herbert Busiku, a talented and dedicated Ugandan, had become the new director of CFA operations in Uganda. The new office in Kampala was built. A four-phase program for supporting Information and Communication Technology was defined and in the last phase of testing in Masaka, S.W. Uganda.

In June 2005, God turned our eyes to "The North." Our mission is to serve the most disadvantaged people in Africa. In the Northern districts of Kitgum, Lira, Pader and Gulu war has displaced 1.7 million people from their rural villages into sprawling IDP camps near the cities. Whole families survive in small thatched huts, each only a few feet from the other. No jobs, no running water, no green space, insufficient sanitation, no medicine or education. 1,000 Acholi (the predominant ethnic group) die each week in these squalid camps, 41% of them are children under five.

Imagine what could have been. Imagine what is and what will come. A whole generation has been born and raised in these camps, their lives disconnected from the land of their ancestors, from a time of cat-



Kay Schmidt Youth Center dedication.

tle and crops and self-sufficiency on fertile land they loved. The memory of this generation is scared by murder, torture, abduction, sexual violence and finally internment in IDP camps. Theirs is a legacy of deep insecurity, a heritage of nightmares in a cycle of revenge. More than anything else, these people need hope. They need to believe there will be an end to decades of suffering. They need to believe in the Resurrection coming in full, powerful bloom.

Sacred Heart Seminary, a Center of Hope

The Seminary is at the center of that hope. It is a place of deep contradiction, holding in its heart both the pain of suffering and the energy of unbounded hope. In 2003 rebels attacked the seminary and abducted 41 seminarians, 11 of which are still missing. This seminary is also at the very center of an initiative for peace and physical reconstruction. Here Msgr. Matthew Odong, with other religious and lay colleagues, works tirelessly on the internal infrastructure of hope. There can be no lasting peace without a spiritual foundation of forgiveness and reconciliation. Arms widespread, with piercing eyes and passionate voice he asks, "What will they do when they go home? When the woman in this house knows very well the son of her neighbor- in that house right next door-is the one who raped her daughter? This is the reality. They have to look to Jesus. There has to be forgiveness."

Msgr. Matthew also works tirelessly building the concrete infrastructure of peace. He knows the youth are far behind in education, which broadens the mind, builds esteem, hones talent and leads to business and employment. He is raising funds for a secondary boarding school for 720 students. He's laying the practical foundations of peace.

It is to Sacred Heart Seminary that Herbert Busiku and I came in early 2006 with our five loaves and two fishes. We came with a hundred computers and a commitment to place Information and Communication Technology all over the city of Gulu - and support it with people on the ground. Msgr's home became our home as we bunked in a residence hall and then moved out from "command central" to interview organizations in Gulu recommended by him and other trusted leaders. The man radiates goodwill and positive energy. He encouraged and supported us every way possible.

Computers for Africa's Commitment

As it turns out, seven organizations in Gulu are ready to receive a CFA computer lab in 2006. Seven more will likely come on board in 2007 with an estimated 6,000 people benefiting from our transplanted technology in the next two years. Each year the hardware from Omaha will arrive in August and will be followed with a cycle of support. We will help them set up the labs, teach them computer maintenance and repair, connect their labs to the World Wide Web, and help them form virtual community by launching a common web site.

The computers carry the potential to build hope by helping communities exchange information, share resources, and unite in a common cause. All this is potential. As I told the people in



Ruth & Tim Leacock



Herbert Busiku

Masaka, "If this virtual community project succeeds, it will be because of your commitment to one another, your generosity of spirit, your vision, and your courage to lead." That Association of Masaka schools will soon put up Uganda's first web site created by and for a community of secondary schools.

Everyone a Missionary

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." CFA is a small organization started by a few people in an average USA town. Our volunteers have brought computers to 64 African communities, 20,000 people in four years.

Listen to your heart. Listen with gratitude for all you have and hope for all that could be. Listen for the invitation to be a missionary in the way God intended for you. Like St. Theresa, you can stay right where you are, doing small things with extraordinary love for those around you. You can pray mighty prayers for the transformation of hearts that will transform the world. You can donate funds to support those who go where you cannot go, build what you cannot build. You can dare to imagine, creating something new with God-given talents and the help of good-hearted neighbors.

In 2002 the American Bishops called us to solidarity with Africa: "Our faith demands it. Our sisters and brothers are asking for our help. Our world needs this effort. The United States has special responsibilities and we can make a difference."

Do something. And do it for yourself. You will soon find serving the poor is a privilege that returns more blessings than one ever gave. It brings one closer to the person we were meant to be, calling us to live the Gospel and the mission of Christianity. It anchors life and breaks open love. It brings one into the very heart of God where, with restored dignity and hope, we find our African sisters and brothers, and we all come home.

Ruth Scherer Leacock and Tim Leacock are natives of Minnesota. Ruth was born and raised in Holy Name of Jesus parish, Medina. Tim was born and raised in St. Leo's parish, St. Paul. In 1975, the couple moved to Long Lake, Minnesota and were parishioners of St. George parish until 1985. They currently reside in Kampala, Uganda and will move back to the United States later this year.

MALARIA INITIATIVE

By Dr. Mike Westerhaus

In the mid-19th century, Rudolph Virchow, a noted German physician and social critic, remarked, "If disease is an expression of individual life under unfavorable circumstances, then epidemics must be indicative of mass disturbances." In this light, the deplorable health conditions facing northern Uganda are a grim reminder that the Acholi population has indeed suffered a mass disturbance over the past twenty years due to war. Crowded conditions in internally displaced people's (IDP) camps create great vulnerability to the widespread movement of infectious disease among the population. Insecurity and destroyed infrastructure mean that most people are unable to access adequate medical care when they are sick. As a result, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria have taken a devastat-



Dr. Mike Westerhaus & Dr. Yoti Zabulon at Lacor Hospital

100% of all funds received go directly to Monsignor Matthew for the work of the Church in the Archdiocese of Gulu. All the costs of mailing, printing of the newsletter, accounting, office expenses, non-profit reporting to Federal and State agencies and Dan & Pete's travel expenses to Africa and Washington, DC are paid by the Vaughan and Truax families.

ing toll on the population as revealed by a recent World Health Organization (WHO) study showing that on average 1000 people die unnecessary deaths per week in the IDP camps. An overwhelming percentage of these deaths are due to preventable and treatable disease.

One of the top killers in northern Uganda is malaria, a disease caused by a parasite that is transmitted through mosquito bites. The WHO study mentioned above found that 47.5% of the deaths in children under 5 in Gulu IDP camps were due to malaria. Between 1992 and 2003, malaria accounted for over 49,000 admissions at St. Mary's Lacor Hospital; this is equivalent to 27.3% of all admissions. Children under the age of 5, pregnant women and people with HIV/AIDS are at the highest risk of developing severe malaria not only because of weaker immune systems but also because of social factors, such as gender inequality, lack of security and social exclusion, that make them more vulnerable to disease. Not surprisingly, they bear the greatest burden of malarial disease in northern Uganda.

The devastating impact of malaria upon the Acholi population is especially tragic given that malaria can be both prevented with insecticide-treated mosquito nets and easily cured with medications. Consider that malaria remained a major problem in the United States until the mid-20th century. However, with the implementation of strong public health measures, malaria was eradicated from the US by 1949. Sadly, such success stories only transpire in wealthy countries. In northern Uganda, only 7% of children under 5 have a mosquito net under which to sleep. This lack of access to preventative measures and the subsequent morbidity and mortality due to malaria are reflections of deeply entrenched poverty, war and inequality.

Recognizing the unacceptable persistence of preventable death to malaria, PBS aired a feature on malaria in January 2006. Take a look at: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa/jan-june06/malaria_1-04.html. The program reported on an innovative initiative that has united African workers and Japanese technology in the launching of a mosquito net factory in Arusha, Tanzania. The "A to Z" factory produces mosquito nets that are designed to last 4-7 years, providing much needed improvement over previous nets which often lasted only a year.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a major program early this year to provide mosquito nets. As a result of this program, a malaria initiative has been started by a group of individuals connected to the Archdiocese of Gulu. During February and March consultations were held with USAID, a number of community-based organizations working in Gulu, and staff at Lacor Hospital in order to assess the unfilled gaps in efforts to prevent and treat malaria in northern Uganda. It was determined that a particular need exists for mosquito net distribution to people living in isolated IDP camps far from any health facilities and to people living with HIV/AIDS. The initiative aims to distribute up to 50,000 nets through two local organizations, Caritas Gulu and Comboni Samaritan. Caritas Gulu, a social development organization affiliated with the Archdiocese of Gulu, has done extensive outreach to marginalized populations in outlying IDP camps. Comboni Samaritan, a community-based organization established to provide care to people with HIV/AIDS, currently works with over 4000 clients. Preventing malaria transmission promises a tangible reduction in suffering experienced by those living in northern Uganda. A reduction in malaria will also relieve the burden on healthcare facilities such as Lacor hospital, thereby freeing up resources to address other challenging medical issues. The malaria initiative creates an opportunity for response to the greatest threat to the health of the Acholi popula-

tion. It is such efforts that offer hope in working to diminish the impact of this particularly lethal "mass disturbance" in Acholi life.

Mike Westerhaus will graduate from Harvard Medical School on June 8th. On June 20th he will begin his three-year internship/residency at Brigham & Women's Hospital in the Boston area. During this period he will have the opportunity to spend some time working at Lacor Hospital in Gulu in the field of infectious disease. Mike grew up in Cold Spring, Minnesota.



New bus in front of the church at Sacred Heart Seminary.



Second container of books arrive in Gulu.
30 additional schools supplied.