

Ugandan Rebels Retaliate Against Government Attack

By Beth Tuckey



The LRA is known for using child soldiers.

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Two weeks after the Ugandan government initiated a botched military operation against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in DR Congo, the angered rebels initiated a string of attacks against the Congolese civilian population. According to reports from Caritas International and other news agencies, over 400 have been killed, nearly 200 abducted, and scores raped. To make matters worse, the Ugandan government is no closer to catching Joseph Kony, the LRA's notorious leader, than they were before the military offensive. The rationale behind the Ugandan government's action may have been legitimate, but its poor execution left civilians vulnerable to a vengeful rebel army.

The military operation, code named Operation Lightning Thunder, began on December 14th with approval from the Congolese and South Sudanese governments. President Joseph Kabila of the DR Congo gave explicit consent to Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni to target the LRA in their base camp in Congo and sent a small number of troops to assist in the ground operation. Since mid-2008, the LRA has terrorized the population in north-east DR Congo, abducting over 600 children, looting villages, raping women, and occasionally killing civilians. However, recognizing that his own army was stretched thin fighting the FDLR and CNDP rebel groups in the east, President Kabila gladly bequeathed military authority to the Ugandans to tackle the LRA.

Lightning Thunder was kept as secret as possible in the lead-up to the initial air strike, mainly because the Ugandans feared Kony would get early wind of the attack and escape to one of his many hideouts in Congo, Central African Republic, or South Sudan.

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Supposedly, the initial plan was more complex than the final product. Uganda intended to begin with an aerial bombardment by MiG-21 bombers, follow up with Mi-24 helicopter gunships, and conclude with a ground operation that could round up any stragglers. This plan, however, was hampered by poor weather conditions that prevented the super-sonic bombers from flying. Although putting off the attack might have allowed the weather to clear, it might also have been harder to keep the secret from Kony and other LRA high commanders.

“An attack as poorly executed as this one was bound to result in further violence, instability, and death in the region.”

So, Museveni ordered the army to carry out the attack, bombing somewhat haphazardly from the helicopter gunships. Kony managed to leave the camp about ten to fifteen minutes before the attack – no one knows yet whether he was tipped off or whether by luck he escaped the bombing. It is alleged that Kony found out about the attack with help from his friends in Khartoum, but it is unlikely that he was told the correct day and time. Regardless, instead of killing Kony (the real purpose of the mission), several other LRA members died, most of them recently abducted child soldiers.

The operation destroyed five LRA camps and caused them to scatter, leaving many of their more expensive belongings such as flight trackers, as well as necessities like food and clothing. Angered that Museveni would take such bold action, the LRA retaliated and went on a killing spree that has since been nicknamed the “Christmas massacres.” Churches have been attacked, homes burned, and people slaughtered. The LRA have also abducted as many as 200 children to fold into their ranks.

Over the weekend of January 10th, LRA spokesman David Matsanga led a delegation to deliver a letter to the UN envoy to the Uganda conflict, ex-Mozambique President Joachim Chissano. Matsanga told the BBC “the message is very clear: The LRA are interested in peace, that's why the LRA wants a ceasefire... we are calling for a dialogue.” Months earlier, Chissano had arranged the signing of the Final Peace Agreement (FPA), to which Kony never showed. It is now widely understood that Kony stalled the signing several times in order to rebuild his troops, recruit

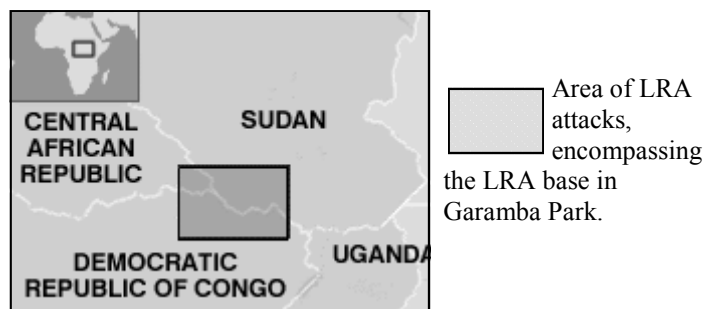
child soldiers, and acquire sufficient food stocks.

Museveni claims that the military offensive was conducted to encourage Kony to come out of the bush to sign the FPA, and that ultimately, it was the frustration over Kony’s absence that prompted the military attack. If this is indeed true, then the letter delivered by the LRA delegation may bring the peace agreement one step closer to fruition. However, it is unlikely that Kony will be trusted again, after using the 2008 FPA process to his own advantage. Kony still fears that after signing the FPA, he will be arrested and taken to The Hague – the one point that has always stood between the LRA and a peace settlement.

An attack as poorly executed as this one was bound to result in further violence, instability, and death in the region. In a statement released on January 9th,

Senator Russell Feingold (D-WI) declared that “Regional militaries have an important role to play in addressing the LRA threat, but I have long warned of the risks of rash and poorly planned military action and I am concerned the current offensive has been just that. It has not done enough to save rebel abductees, left civilians vulnerable to reprisal attacks by the rebels, and fueled regional instability.” A targeted military attack against Kony and top rebel leadership may in fact end the conflict, but an attack that utilizes aerial bombing cannot begin to protect the child soldiers who may be in the pathway of the bombs.

AFJN urges all actors to work toward a peaceful resolution to the LRA violence. Although President George Bush met with South Sudanese President Salva Kiir on January 7th, the U.S. did not articulate how it will help end the LRA crisis in Congo. We encourage you to visit the Resolve Uganda website (www.resolveuganda.org) to send a letter to your members of Congress asking them to protect children, arrest the LRA leaders, and appropriate money toward the reconstruction of northern Uganda. The events of the last several weeks indicate that the crisis is far from over – do your part to advocate for the lives of those affected by the LRA.



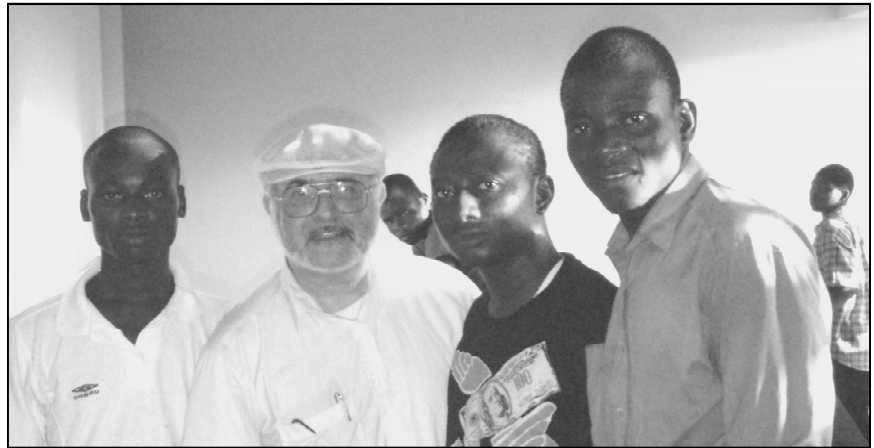
Bringing a Broken Community Together On Its Own

By Fr. Rocco Puopolo

In 1997 while director of the National Pastoral Center in Kenema Sierra Leone, I was invited to attend the inaugural meeting of COPA, the Coalition for Peace in Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa. This meeting was an attempt to bring together practitioners from around Africa who were implementing indigenous means of resolving conflicts, using traditional community leaders and time tested processes. There were representatives from Uganda, Togo, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burundi. This 20 day swap-shop piqued my interest in this method of “restorative justice” and made an impact. There are ways and means of bringing a broken community together on its own terms.

Fast forward 10 years and I find myself here in Washington at AFJN. The Staff and Board have chosen restorative justice as one of our focus campaigns for the next few years. There are a number of African academics who have written about restorative justice, but it seems that it only remains a concept to be studied, not promoted, in the global north. Through a generous grant from the Adorers of the Blood of Christ Community, AFJN has initiated a three year project that involves research on the ground, consultation with academic scholars in Catholic Social Thought, and the publication of a book. It is our hope that the book will assist not only academics, but policymakers and others concerned with development, peace,

and justice in Africa. Renewed support and understanding for restorative justice processes may give it valued space in post-conflict societies. It is community based, victim-

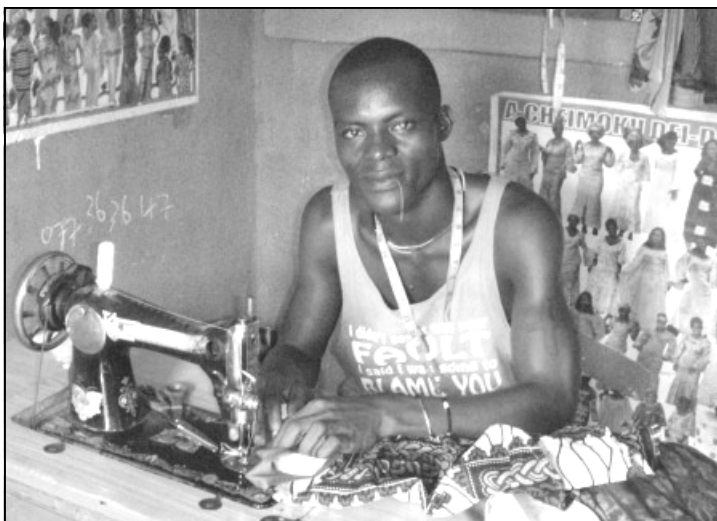


AFJN Director Rocco Puopolo with the “Push Boys” from northern Ghana.

focused, and its intention is to restore a sense of safety, finding ways to bring the victimizer back to the community through admission of fault and some appropriate “punishment.” Ritual is central to the process and grounds it in the life of the community.

My recent visit to Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone was the first of the staff visits to the continent. From the first meeting with the “push boys” from the Northern city of Yendi, Ghana, I saw restorative justice at work. These secondary school boys and girls are displaced and work at the Medina market in Accra. They are out of school and living on the streets because of a chieftom rivalry hundreds of miles away that turned violent. I sat with a representative group of about 17 of them in midst of a busy market and listened to their stories of the conflict, displacement, and disappointment. When asked if they could suggest a way forward that would restore peace to Yendi in a just manner, I was surprised to discover a very wise and creative response, one I would not have thought of from my experience nor found in any conflict resolution manual with which I am familiar.

I came to this study with the doubt that communities could come together in the wake of displacement and destruction. However, I found that as communities settle, even in displaced locations and under hard conditions, leaders emerge and the communities, if given the space and support, can begin the task of restoring themselves.



Ibrahim, an ex-combatant, is now a tailor.

(“WEST AFRICA” continued on page 7)

Interpreting Ghana's 2008 Presidential Election

By Bahati Ntama Jacques

Once again Ghana set the bar higher for the future of the democratic process in Africa. Much has been written about the past, present and the future of democracy in Africa and most of the literature and political analysis point to the many ills that hinder African democracy. However, the December 28, 2008 presidential elections in Ghana are a statement to the contrary, a statement of hope for democracy in Africa.

In a close run-off election, John Atta Mills of the opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), defeated Nana Akufo-Addo of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) with 50.23% of the votes against 49.77%. The outgoing Ghanaian President John Agyekum Kufuor served two terms (January 7, 2001-January 7, 2008), the maximum according to Ghana's constitution. During the elections there were a few incidents of violence and complaints by the opposition of irregularities in some areas, but nothing major happened to question the validity of the ballots. Also, Ghanaians credit the success of the elections to Dr. Afari Djan for effectively running the electoral commission, with the help of a credible and responsible police force.

The birth of democracy in Ghana was in April 1992 with a referendum that approved the multi-party system. Compared to many other African countries, Ghana is a well administered nation. It has been relatively peaceful since its independence, with the exception of the 1994-95 ethnic violence over land in the North. Like many nations in Africa, Ghana has suffered from corruption and has a record of four military coups, the most historic of which was the 1966 overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, the first Ghanaian president. He was a well known activist for the pan-African movement whose goal was and still is to capture and preserve African heritage, promote African values, end slavery, racism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Ghana is named after the medieval empire in West Africa and it means "Warrior King." It is a former British colony that achieved its independence in 1957, but did not have an African president until 1960.

Ghana's success stands out as an example for many African nations. It contradicts the post-colonial trend of ma-

nipulating and imposing constitutional referendums by African heads of states to accommodate their ambitions for re-election beyond constitutional mandates. Among the many examples are Chadian President Idriss Déby who has been in power since February 1991, and Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni who rose to power in 1985 and remains today. They both took the office by force and are serving their third terms as a result of forced constitutional referendums that qualify them to run over and over for the office of presidency.

Additionally, in 2008 there were two military coups-to-power. First, the democratically elected president of Mauritania, Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, was overthrown on August 6th by a team of his military officers led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who now serves as President. Interestingly, the United States has engaged in train and equip programs in Mauritania for years, funding the very forces who overthrew President Abdallahi. Second, on December 23, Captain Moussa Dadis Camara proclaimed himself President of Guinea after the death of its longtime ruler President Lansana Conte who also rose to power by military coup. Ghana's successful elections are contrary to the ritual of military coup that has dominated African politics for a long time.

"If democracy is the government by the people and for the people, many African nations have a long way to go. However, Ghana is one of the few nations where the government has created channels for the civil society to influence policy..."

Furthermore, Ghana's example calls for a change against the practice of rigging elections. This was the case in the 2007 presidential elections in Kenya which, after being contested by the opposition, led to violence and claimed about 1000 lives and displaced approximately 1500 people. The 2008 election in Zimbabwe is another example. The two cases were bloody and settled by a power sharing deal facilitated by the international community.

Who is to blame for the failure of the democratic process in Africa? Some analysts point to poverty instead of greed;

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Promoting Sustainable Development Through Local and Global Means

By Jenna Rogers

In November 2008, AFJN Staff Members Bahati Ntama and Beth Tuckey presented AFJN's work at a conference sponsored by the Ford Family Program in Human Development at Notre Dame University. This article highlights the program's work on development in Sub-Saharan Africa and its connection with a Ugandan village and Uganda Martyrs University.

The Ford Family Program in Human Development Studies and Solidarity is a new part of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. The Ford Program seeks to build a transnational and interdisciplinary alliance of scholars, public servants, conscientious citizens, and institutional partners to address critical challenges confronted by those living in extreme poverty, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In line with the mission of the University of Notre Dame "to create a sense of human solidarity and concern for the common good that will bear fruit as learning becomes service to justice," the Ford Program believes that the expertise and knowledge that a university has to offer can be turned outward in addressing real world issues.

The Ford Program promotes a holistic model for human development. Together with partner institutions, the program seeks to better understand the complex and interrelated issues affecting the development process and to turn that knowledge into action. In engaging with local partners in Uganda the program recognizes that local leadership must drive project planning, implementation, and coordination and that community ownership is the cornerstone of sustainability.

The Millennium Villages project, a key partner initiative coordinated by Millennium Promise, the Earth Institute at Columbia University, and the United Nations Development Program shares this broad view of sustainable devel-

opment. As a Millennium Villages partner, the Ford Program has the opportunity to learn from and contribute to this bold, transnational effort while at the same time developing its own unique approach.

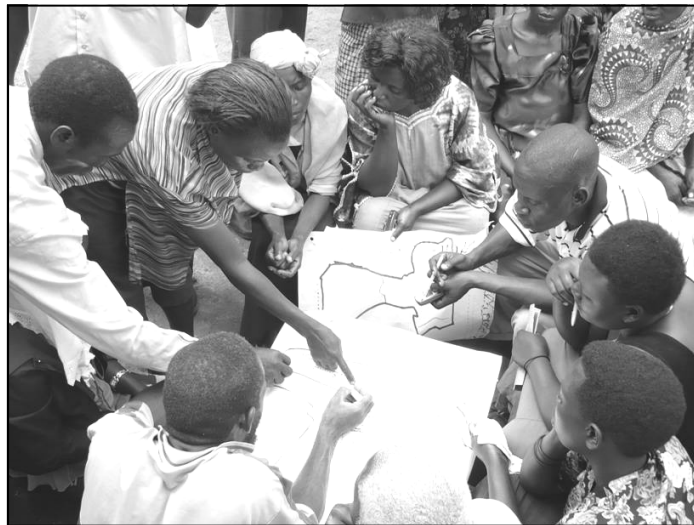
Springing from and building upon our collaboration with the Millennium Villages project, Notre Dame has initiated a new partnership with the people of Nnindye, a rural community with strong local leadership but very real challenges. This village of 5,000 farmers and fishermen is located 10 miles west of Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) the country's premier Catholic university and one of the

Ford Program's vital research and project implementation partners.

Nnindye is a community poised for change. With a relatively small external investment of expertise and financial resources, residents are working towards increasing agricultural productivity, improving access to basic health care, safe water, and education, as well as improving infrastructure that connects people to information and markets.

During conversations with UMU and Notre Dame representatives, community members have been candid in discussing their hopes and dreams for their community and developing the most effective investment strategy to reach these goals. There is a clear consensus among local leaders that the people of Nnindye are embracing this opportunity to work with Notre Dame and Uganda Martyrs, as well as each other, to build a better future for their community and families, as well as providing lessons for young people (students) who are the emerging pillars of sustainable development.

Notable successes at this point include: residents' record attendance at meetings; the level of engagement, particularly when it comes to discussing ways of energizing everyone in Nnindye to get involved; and achieving a common understanding of Notre Dame's and Uganda Martyrs'



Community members in Nnindye conducting a mapping exercise.

("FORD PROGRAM" continued on page 7)

Yes, Africa Matters!

As John Allen's New Year writings for the National Catholic Reporter proclaim, "Africa has a special focus for Pope Benedict in 2009." Pope Benedict is visiting Cameroon and Angola in March, the Pan African Bishop's Conference SECAM will be meeting in Rome in September. Perhaps most importantly, an Extraordinary Synod on Africa, the second such gathering will take place in Rome from October 4th to 25th. The theme of this Synod is focused on Justice and Reconciliation and therefore compliments many of our advocacy efforts.

AFJN, in cooperation with the Catholic Task Force for Africa (CTFA) in Washington, has been preparing for these events since last year. These preparations can be found on a new website: www.yesafricamatters.org. This website is a collaborative effort of the CTFA to raise the profile of Africa and bring together some of the initiatives that have come about as a response to the 2001 U.S. Bishops' letter, [A Call to Solidarity with Africa](#). The site will also engage the U.S. Church as preparations for the Second Extraordinary Synod on Africa get underway. It is a needed vehicle to bring all the initiatives, actions, and resources together to focus on being **"TOGETHER WITH AFRICA: A CELEBRATION OF HOPE."** Our plan is that parishes, teachers, and individuals both in the U.S. and in Africa will access the resources found on the website and join us in this celebration of hope.

Some of those resources and initiatives: a resource guide for the 2001 Solidarity with Africa letter; the USCCB Solidarity for Africa Annual Appeal with the granting of those funds for pastoral activities in Africa; the various Africa Summits held throughout the U.S. (e.g. Chicago and Dayton) that are done in collaboration with local Justice and Peace offices, CRS and AFJN; twinning/partnering parishes and Dioceses with Africa; University links with Study Centers in Africa; and reflections from Africa on the themes of the Synod. As more of these resources and initiatives are created, we will post them on the site. If you know of something that should be there and is not, please send us the link. www.yesafricamatters.org is meant to be a one stop shop for all who strive to be in solidarity with Africa.

Visit www.yesafricamatters.org to see what we're doing to prepare for the Synod!

("GHANA" continued from page 4)

colonialism and neo-colonialism instead of corruption, mismanagement of resources, lack of strong democratic institutions, and lack political will to implement the aspirations of the people. To have a democratic, peaceful and prosperous nation, it takes good governance, the rule of law, transparency, an active civil society, sense of common good, freedom of speech, respect for human rights, and all these in concert with a strong and genuine desire for a bright present and a brighter future.

If democracy is the government by the people and for the people, many African nations have a long way to go. However, Ghana is one of the few nations where the government has created channels for the civil society to influence policy through grassroots advocacy, freedom of speech in the media, and parliamentary lobbying. Their work during the 2008 presidential elections bears witness to their strength. Ghanaian civil society tirelessly called upon the political leaders, the people, the media, and the army to stay calm and allow the electoral commission to do its work.

On December 30th, a coalition of civil society composed of the Christian Council; the Catholic Bishops Conference; Civic Forum Initiative, and other eminent persons such as Maulvi Wahab Adams, Head of the Ammadiyya Mission in Ghana, contacted the Chief of Defense Staff as the tension grew when the run off got tighter. In turn, he assured them "of the neutrality of the military and their loyalty to protect the State." Today, after a successful presidential election, Ghana stands out as a regional and international model of an emerging democratic nation.

You can read daily entries from Rocco's November trip to West Africa on rjwestafrica.blogspot.com

Beth Tuckey and Bahati Ntama are presently in Burundi, Uganda, and DR Congo on our second continental visit related to the restorative justice project. Stay tuned for an update on their work in the next issue of *Around Africa*.

(“WEST AFRICA” continued from page 3)

I found the most powerful example of this in Sierra Leone where I met the organizers of Fambul Tok (Family Talk), a Sierra Leonean initiative that provides a local community the support and guidance to create their own framework and process that can lead to restoration. Fambul Tok’s first outreach was to the local community in Kailahun, the very place in the Eastern Province where the insurgents of the 14-year war had their headquarters and whose local community had experienced the war from start to finish. After providing preliminary background information to the community to frame the work ahead, the community initiated a series of evening circles around the fire, sharing the stories of loss and hope, learning to listen to each other and trust the strength of their community.

Well into the first week, after a family shared the loss of their only son, who they thought was alive but displaced in neighboring Liberia or Guinea, one young man came forward to offer his condolences to the family, and, because of the support created by this circle, admitted to killing this son. He was younger then, and he was drugged and part of that maddening crowd of child soldiers, but he did remember that he killed that boy. He knelt before the family, all of them wailing and crying uncontrollably. When the crying subsided, in the uncomfortable silence of not knowing what to do or where to go next, the young man spoke. He acknowledged his wrong doing. Knowing that there was no way he could bring back their son, what he could do was take his place. He offered to take on any

task that the son would have done – brushing the farm, mending the roof, etc. – for the rest of his life. The family accepted and restoration was, at least in part, achieved. Fambul Tok offers some training that supports the elders of the community, be they traditional leaders, pastors, or

“These men and women were encouraged by... restorative justice... it was as if they found their place anew as community leaders.”

teachers, to be the mediation committee in the event that after the restoration, some unfinished business may come up and need the community’s help once more.

Although much of my time was spent listening, I did speak with several individuals and organizations about the benefits of implementing restorative justice mechanisms. I spoke about some of my findings through interviews with the media in all three countries – both in print and on the radio. At the seminary in Freetown, the Pastoral Center in Kenema, and the Fatima Institute in Makeni, I was able to interact formally with church leaders. These men and women were encouraged by the concept and examples of restorative justice that I shared. It was as if they found their place anew as community leaders with the possibility and responsibility of offering reconciliation and restoration on a local level.

I found that restorative justice strengthens the communities with self determination and provides healing in the face of a broken past. It is a true grassroots process, placing the practice in the very midst of the local community where it is needed most.

(“FORD PROGRAM” continued from page 5)

intensions and proposed methodology for fostering sustainable development.

The Ford Program’s community mobilization philosophy is grounded in the belief that positive social change is possible only when people give respect, demand respect, and are committed to being the agents of their own change. The Program endeavors to facilitate this process, when invited, by helping people find areas of common interest, and forging a singular voice and commitment regarding how to affect positive change.

The Ford Program and UMU recognize that sustainability

is key for long-term, positive change. As Nnindyé develops and residents are empowered to save income, local contribution to outreach projects will increase and external funding will decrease. Together we will foster deepening relationships and promote the exchange of knowledge for many years to come.



Jenna Rogers is a Programs Intern for the Ford Family Program in Human Development and Solidarity.

The **Africa Faith and Justice Network**, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, educates and advocates for just relations with Africa.

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