

## ***Project UGANDA Core Lesson Plan***

### **Core Lesson Plan:**

This three-day lesson will provide students with an overview of Uganda, its culture, and its conflicts as a springboard for discussion during the videoconferences. Students will get a general introduction to the life, culture, and history of Northern Uganda and the guerilla war spearheaded by the notoriously brutal Lord's Resistance Army (LRA.)

The LRA terrorized most of northern Uganda for the past twenty years. Students will learn about the Acholi people who constitute almost a million northern Ugandans and the way their daily lives have changed throughout the face of the war. Specifically, students will be introduced to the child "Night Commuters" and Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camps. Finally, students will learn about the recent peace talks between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army and the ways in which Northern Ugandans are reconciling and moving forward.

The lesson plan in this document is designed for *all* classes participating in the videoconferences and seeks to give each student a solid understanding of the general conflict in Uganda and some of its implications and consequences.

The document "Project UGANDA: Optional Materials" provides a group of supplementary lessons and articles that teachers can mix and match with the Core Lesson so that students can be more prepared for their respective videoconferences, each of which corresponds to a different subtopic of Northern Uganda.

## **Day One**

1. (10 minutes) As class begins ask students the following questions:
  - How many languages do you speak? How many languages are spoken by distinct groups of people in your state? Explain that students will learn about Uganda, a country in eastern Africa slightly smaller than the state of Oregon, in which various tribes speak dozens of languages.
  - Now ask students the following:
    - What are you most afraid of?
    - What are the biggest real dangers that you, as a child, face in this country?
2. Tell students they will revisit these questions in the next few days as they learn about the dangers children have faced in Northern Uganda as a result of an ongoing situation of conflict and violence.
3. Project a map of Uganda (*see Appendix 1*) on the overhead or using a computer screen for students to look at while you introduce Uganda and its people. Use information from "The People of Uganda" (*see Appendix 2*) as a foundation for your own explanation or as a handout.
4. (5 minutes) Now read the following to students, a brief introduction to the Acholi people, who have been the major victims of violence in Northern Uganda for the past twenty years:

### ***The Acholi in Northern Uganda:***

*The Acholi people originally inhabited South Sudan on the western slopes of Imatong Mountains and Acholi hills and have, over time, moved to parts of Northern Uganda as well. They practice a form of mixed farming in which they keep cattle, goats, sheep and fowls in addition to subsistence agriculture; by growing sorghum, millet, simsim, beans, tobacco and sweet potatoes.*

*The Acholi society is a sedentary, agrarian community organised in chiefdoms, which vary greatly in size but consist of a cluster of villages including the surrounding territory used for agriculture and hunting over which the Rwot, or chief, exercise his authority. Music and dance are central to Acholi culture, as you'll see when you meet the Ugandan students.*

5. (15 minutes) After reading the short introduction to the Acholi people, divide students into six groups. Give each group a different topic of the Acholi people to learn about and discuss (*see Appendix 4*); these are small snippets that will take students only a few minutes to read. Tell each group to examine the practice and compare it with the way it works in our culture. For example, the first group will read its slip of paper about Acholi marriages and discuss the ways in which marriage practices in the United States are both similar to and different from the way Acholi people marry. Choose one person to report back to the class.

6. (15 minutes) Explain to students that what they've just learned about the Acholi has been, in some cases, drastically altered for the past twenty years because of widespread violence from civil war. Give students "Quick Guide to the War in Northern Uganda " handout (*see Appendix 3*) and have them read it silently. Follow reading with discussion.
7. (15 minutes) Now that students have read over a summary of the conflict in Northern Uganda, ask the following questions:
  - Who's involved in the conflict? What is each group's role?
  - What are the reasons for violence?
  - What type of violence is going on?
  - Why do you think it's gone on for so long?
  - Does this remind you of any other violent conflicts you know or have heard about?
8. Homework: Tell students to write a one-page journal entry about a typical day in their life. Make sure they use a lot of detail, including specific hours and the amount of time they spend traveling in buses, cars, etc. and the amount of time they spend in class, doing various activities, and with their family.

## ***Day Two***

1. (10 minutes) Break students into small groups at the beginning of class. Have students share their typical days with one another, looking for commonalities. Ask students to discuss the following:
  - How much time do you spend getting to school?
  - How much time do you spend in class?
  - How much time do you spend on after-school activities?
  - How much time do you spend in a bus or car?
  - How much time do you spend *walking* to get somewhere?
  
2. (10 minutes) Now have students read an article on the Night Commuters in Northern Uganda. Remind students that one of the major atrocities committed by the LRA is the abduction of children as part of a recruitment and brainwashing process so they will join the rebel forces and learn to kill. For this reason, over the past few years, as many as 40,000 children from the age of 9-16 have gotten into the habit of walking as many as five kilometers each night to seek safety in larger towns in the area. Tell students that now the numbers are dropping dramatically as stability is restored, little by little, to the region. The article they are about to read is from August 2005 (*see Appendix 5*).
  
3. (15 minutes) Leading the class in discussion, have students discuss the following:
  - Why do these kids walk so far at night?
  - What do you think you would do in this situation?
  - Have you ever felt this scared before? What do you think it feels like to live in this situation?
  
4. (15 minutes) Ask students to refer back to their homework on a typical day. As an imaginative exercise, have them write a typical day for a Northern Ugandan child, including the night commute. Gather students into their small groups from earlier to discuss the differences between their typical days and the days they've described for Ugandans.
  
5. (5 minutes) To bring the situation up-to-date, read the second page of Appendix 5, the short article "Night Commuter Shelters Close" as a class.

## Day Three

1. (15 minutes) Explain to students that in recent months, the situation in Northern Uganda has been improving. Many Acholi who had been living in IDP camps are now returning to their villages, under the direction of President Museveni. Explain also that in many cases, LRA members have been captured, and a large debate rages over how to mete out justice. While the International Criminal Court has one way of punishing criminals, traditional law in the Acholi tribe has its own set of rules. Tell students they will now read an article about the way members of the Acholi are dealing with former LRA members and incorporating them back into their communities (*see Appendix 6*).
2. (20 minutes) As a class, discuss the following questions:
  - How does mato oput work?
  - What do you think of the Acholi's approach to justice?
  - Do you think a similar justice system could ever be used here? Does it remind you of anything you know?
  - What's at the root of the differences between International criminal law and traditional Acholi justice rituals?
  - Which method would you feel more comfortable with in this situation?
  - What do you think should be done with the LRA's leader, Joseph Kony?
3. (15 minutes) Discuss the very latest in the situation. For example, peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA were scheduled to take place again on April 26<sup>th</sup>. Teachers, use the following sites to find the most updated information.
  - [http://www.acholinet.com/index.php?option=com\\_newsfeeds&task=view&feedid=5&Itemid=7](http://www.acholinet.com/index.php?option=com_newsfeeds&task=view&feedid=5&Itemid=7)
  - <http://www.ugandacan.org/archive/1/2007-04>
  - <http://www.irinnews.org/IRIN-Africa.aspx>
  - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200704100348.html>

## Appendix 1: Map of Uganda



## ***Appendix 2: The People of Uganda***

Literally dozens of tribes make up the people of Uganda, an independent nation since 1962. The Bantu-speaking peoples dominate most of the southern region of the country. In the north live the Lango and the Acholi, Nilotic-speaking peoples, and to the east live the Teso and Karamojong, who also speak Nilotic languages. The forests of the west are inhabited by Pygmies.

Two-thirds of the population is Christian, and the remaining third practices animism or Islam. While a significant number of Asians, mostly Sikhs and Hindus, once lived in Uganda decades ago, they were expelled in 1972 under the reign of Idi Amin. Now, because of an invitation from the president, many are returning.



Cuisine in Uganda generally involves beef, goat, or mutton and the starchy “ugali,” or maize meal, which is cooked into a thick porridge, set to dry, and served in flat bricks. The tropical climate lends itself to an abundance of fruits.

Currently, around 28 million people live in Uganda, with an average life expectancy of about 44 years. Latest numbers show that 6.1% of the population, or 1.1 million, is infected with the HIV/AIDS virus, from which about 110,000 people die each year. This relatively low number (compared to many other African countries) is attributed to President Yoweri Museveni’s aggressive campaign to reverse the spread of AIDS, which has proven one of the most effective anti-AIDS programs in Africa.

North of Lake Kyoga, a twenty-year war has plagued village with violence, fear, and displacement, as rebel forces have been killing and abducting Acholi in an effort to gain political clout.

### **Sources:**

<http://www.myuganda.co.ug/people/>

<https://cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ug.html>

## ***Appendix 3: Quick Guide to the War in Northern Uganda***

### **The Conflict:**

The war in northern Uganda has raged now for 21 years, making it Africa's longest running conflict and as described by one UN official: "the world's worst neglected humanitarian crisis." The war has led to the displacement of 1.7 million people - over 80% of the region - who now live in camps of the most squalid conditions. According to recent reports, 1,000 people die each week as a result of the poor conditions in these camps. The war is also known for the brutal abduction and use of child soldiers. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has filled its ranks by abducting over 30,000 children. Many of the luckier children who escape abduction are forced to "night commute" each night to sleep under verandas in towns to avoid kidnapping. Tens of thousands of people have been maimed or killed over the course of the conflict.

The situation in northern Uganda is a complex conflict that has been misunderstood by various actors, leading to inadequate and ineffective policy prescriptions. The war is essentially two conflicts in one: first the fighting of the LRA, which is waging war against the Ugandan government and terror against civilian population in the north, and second, the real grievances of Ugandans in the north against the existing government.

The war arose out of a divisive political climate, which was embedded by British 'divide and rule' colonialism and then perpetuated by post-colonial Ugandan politics. This climate created a politicized North-South divide in Uganda, which, mixed with the normalization of political rebellion, created a swamp for insurgency. When the current president, Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement took power by coup in 1986, they alienated northerners, creating perceptual and actual incentives for rebellion.

Since 1986, the insurgency within northern Uganda has undergone four stages, beginning with a more popular rebellion of former army officials and evolving into to the current pseudo-spiritual warlordism of the LRA. To date, the LRA consists predominantly of abducted children brainwashed, brutalized and forced to kill viciously as child soldiers. Alienated from the Acholi, the LRA wages terror on the civilian population as a means to maintain attention and challenge the government.

After attempted peace talks facilitated by Betty Bigombe collapsed in 1994, the conflict was morphed into a proxy war that cannot be understood separate from the geopolitics of the Great Lakes Region. In 1994, the Sudanese government began to provide military assistance and support the LRA, while the Ugandan government provided military assistance to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), an insurgency in southern Sudan. The West, particularly the United States, saw this as the battlefront of the war against the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in sub-Saharan Africa and provided significant amounts of aid to the SPLA through Uganda. New elements of a war economy and arms trafficking made peace more elusive.

Following September 11, 2001, the United States has increased its strategic alliance with President Museveni and his NRM regime in Uganda. The U.S. quickly declared the LRA a terrorist group and increased military aid to the Ugandan government. This

relationship only further solidified the insistence of Museveni on a military approach to end the war. Unfortunately, the "military solution" has exacerbated northern grievances and proven ineffective over the years. According to almost all analysts of the conflict, serious facilitated negotiations with trust-building mechanisms are the key to peace. However, the obstinacy and inconsistency of Museveni, coupled with the incoherency of the LRA, has made such talks difficult.

In the summer of 2006, the newly-formed semi-autonomous Government of South Sudan agreed to host and mediate peace talks between the warring parties. The involvement of such a strategic mediator coupled with new openness by the parties to negotiations led many to call this the "best opportunity in over a decade for peace in northern Uganda." In August, the parties agreed to a Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) that led to relative calm in northern Uganda, allowing some IDPs to return home. However, the talks have since stumbled due to the rigid involvement of the International Criminal Court (ICC), a weak CoH Monitoring Team and divisions within the LRA networks. The international community, especially the U.S. Government, has remained largely silent and missed opportunities to strengthen the peace process. As this neglect continues, the people of northern Uganda remain condemned to lives of despair and displacement.

**Source:**

Uganda Conflict Action Network

<http://www.ugandacan.org/history.php>

## **Appendix 4: Handouts for group work on Acholi people**

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### **Group 1: *Marriage***

Among the Acholi, marriage is a lengthy process. It begins by courting until the young man wins the girl's consent. He goes to her father and pays a small installment of dowry [otono keñ] after which the pair is considered betrothed.

This may last for a long time depending on the final completion of dowry payment after which the bride's status changes from girl [nyako] and becomes a house wife [dako ot]. Acholi dowry is traditionally settled in sheep, goats, spears, hoes. In recent times, money is now accepted.

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### **Group 2: *Birth***

A curious custom attends to the birth of a child. For three days after the birth of a girl (four in the case of a boy) the mother has to abstain from certain acts, varying from village to village, including eating certain foods and the baby is not allowed out of the house.

At the end of this period the mother calls her women friends together for meat and formally commits the previously forbidden act. The baby has various charms hung around the neck for protection against diseases and 'evil eyes'.

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### **Group 3: *Naming***

The Acholi can take as many as five names. The first one 'nying kwan' the name taken from some event at his birth e.g. Ulum -born in the grass; Okec - born at a time of famine.

Some of these names may be split into two or three, e. g, a man named Okec may also be called Langara (locust), because the famine at his birth was caused by locusts; flirtation name [nying moc ] a curious name taken from some curious event and acclaimed by others e.g. olwiyo, she whistles - a man's wife calls him to food by whistling for him; yo dok olan -a man courts his girl by telling her she sways her buttocks like a bell; okwuto cet pa mare.

He broke wind at his mother-in-law's. There are war [spear] names [nying tong]. There are also drum names [nying bul] shared by the youth among themselves.

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#### Group 4: ***Relationships***

The Acholi entertain extended family [blood] relationships and this may affect distribution of wealth. However, the closest relations after the father and mother are his brothers by the same mother and next his maternal uncle.

A man has to give one tusk of his first elephant to his mother's brother and one to the chief. Inheritance is always in the male line and runs roughly as follows: sons, brothers, half-brothers and then uncles. On a man's death his son or failing which, his brother sson takes over all his wives.

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#### Group 5: ***Divorce***

The Acholi women enjoy great freedom to divorce once not satisfied with their husbands but on condition that the new husband pays the dowry that her earlier husband had paid. Fornication and adultery are punished in the Acholi tradition. It costs 5 sheep for fornication and 15 for adultery.

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#### Group 6: ***Death***

On a person's death all the friends and relatives gather together for the death dance. Sheep are killed and sorghum beer is brewed and the man is mourned from 2 - 5 days according to his age and importance.

He is buried by the entrance of his hut, and trees are sometimes planted on the grave and a sheep sacrificed. Chiefs are buried in special chief's burying grounds wrapped in clothes and placed on a bed.

The grave is kept open and watched by a young man and girl until decomposition sets in when it is thought safe to throw sand on the body and fill up the grave. The grave is then planted with trees and a fence built round it.

It is thought to be a great misfortune for a man to die a natural death and not be buried in his house. A man who is killed in the bush during hunting or fighting, however, is thought to be lucky, even though he is not buried at all and his body is eaten by vultures.

A special ceremony is then performed under the direction of the ajwaka to call the spirit back to the village.

## ***Appendix 5: Amnesty International*** **The Wire - August 2005**

### ***Uganda's 'night commuters' seek protection from abduction***

*"We come to the shelter because I fear being abducted again. I was eight years old then. I do not want my brothers and sisters to be abducted as I was. We walk fast in the night to be here."*

Each night, Angel (*quoted above*), aged 14, walks a kilometre to the safety of a shelter at St. Mary's Hospital, Lacor, with her four siblings. Nightfall in northern Uganda brings with it the fear of abductions and a unique way of coping – "night commuting". As many as 12,000 children have been abducted by the armed opposition, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), for use as soldiers, sex slaves and porters since June 2002. An unknown number have been killed, while over 15,000 have escaped or been rescued by government soldiers – the Uganda Peoples' Defence Force (UPDF) – since the war began in 1986.

Insecurity in the Gulu, Pader and Kitgum districts of northern Uganda has led to parents sending their children to sleep in urban areas or into the middle of camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, the night commuter phenomenon is also symptomatic of the broader issues relating to the protection of civilians in northern Uganda.

Walking several kilometres each way, many children sleep at specially established centres in towns and their outskirts, such as Lacor, about five kilometres from the town of Gulu. These centres, run by non-governmental organizations, provide a safe and clean place to sleep, clean water and sanitation, basic health care and counselling.

However not every IDP camp is near a centre which offers protection. Each night, tens of thousands of children and a number of adults who are too far from these centres move into the middle of the IDP camps because they feel safer there than on the edges. Those who move to the middle of the camps do not benefit from any special support or protection.

The number of night commuters varies depending on perceptions of safety. A sharp rise since the beginning of the year can be directly linked to the heightened activities of the LRA after the collapse of the peace talks, which were initiated to end the conflict between the LRA and the government of President Yoweri Museveni.

Trying to evade abduction and brutal attacks, most of the children commute without the protection of adult family members to spend the night in urban areas, hospitals, churches or on shop verandas. In so doing, they run the risk of harassment from both government soldiers and the LRA.

Barry, 12 years old, walks two kilometres to reach one of the centres. He has lost both parents in the war. "I come to the centre because I feel safer here," he says. "I am afraid to remain at home as I may get abducted. I live with my aunt. Both my parents were killed by the rebels."

After almost two decades of conflict in northern Uganda, there are still reports of continuing human rights violations, killings, mutilations, abductions, rape and sexual violence. Children bear the brunt of the general climate of violence, their rights violated on a daily basis. With no security in their own homes, they struggle to find an illusion of safety in night commuter shelters.

[www.getloud.ca](http://www.getloud.ca)

March 29th, 2007

### ***Night Commuter Shelters Close***

Gulu district wants all night shelters to close within one month. The decision follows reports that the number of night commuters in the town has dropped from 15,000 in May 2006 to less than 500 last month.

The fall is attributed to the improved security situation in northern Uganda. "The children are continuing to report in the existing night centers because of special needs other than the original security concerns," a report by the district disaster management committee reads.

Night commuters are children who go and sleep at shelters in the towns of northern Uganda for fear of abduction by the LRA rebels.

Their numbers had soared to over 40,000 at the peak of the insurgency in 2003. The phenomenon was a source of inspiration for films like *Invisible Children* and *Lost Children*, which in turn inspired thousands all over the world to participate in the so-called Gulu Walk. [The New Vision](#)

Source: *Invisible Children*

<http://www.invisiblechildren.com/news&press/news/detail.php?pID=2013275052>

## **Appendix 6: Traditional Drink Unites Ugandans**

**BBC Focus on Africa Magazine**

**By Barney Afako**

*A bitter drink known as mato oput by the Acholi people of northern Ugandan may have the ingredients for peace between the Ugandan government and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).*

Mato oput is the ritual climax of an Acholi justice process for bringing reconciliation in the wake of a homicide within the community.

This ceremony was placed on the agenda of peace talks held in the southern Sudanese capital, Juba, reflecting the earnest search for alternatives to address the grave crimes which have characterised two decades of war in northern Uganda.

Apart from the killings, abductions, rapes and sexual enslavement of children, the war has inflicted a humanitarian disaster on the region, with more than a million huddled into the squalor and degradation of camps.

Having seen the LRA escape to neighbouring DR Congo and UN troops abort a mission to arrest suspects - including LRA leader Joseph Kony - Uganda's president Yoweri Museveni has said the LRA should instead acknowledge their crimes to victims and subject themselves to traditional justice within Uganda.

Uganda's Amnesty Act, introduced six years ago, provides a legal framework for this. It recognises traditional justice mechanisms like mato oput, and promotes community reconciliation.

### **Reparation to victims**

Under the act, rebels must genuinely abandon and renounce their crimes. Over 17,000 have already done so and are being reintegrated into their communities.

Like many African communities, the Acholi believe that deep social rifts are caused by killings and require elaborate reconciliation mechanisms to restore fractured relations.

Mato oput is performed after a mediated process has brought together two families and clans.

The offender accepts responsibility, asks for forgiveness and must make reparation to the victims.



Mato oput literally means "drinking the bitter root"

The perpetrator and the victim's family then share the root drink from a calabash, to recall and bury the bitterness of the soured relations.

Another Acholi ritual, gomo tong - the bending of spears - symbolises the ending of hostilities between groups and is also preceded by discussion and truth-telling.

Other cleansing rituals are already used to welcome former LRA combatants into the communities.

This option, however, is threatened by the war crimes indictments issued by International Criminal Court for four senior LRA commanders.

After the disempowerment and indignity inflicted by war, Ugandans are now seeking an active role in resolving this conflict which has torn apart the fabric of their lives and reduced them to observers of their own fate.

In opting for participatory local justice within their communities they are re-asserting lost dignity.

None of these are perfect processes, and neither are they beyond improvement.

Everywhere tradition is adapted to answer more complex modern needs; this affirms Africa's confidence in her ingenuity and rich heritage.

### **Formal justice**

But there are increasing signs that Africans are confidently re-visiting their past.

In Uganda, human rights violations have been credibly attributed to the army and auxiliaries operating in the war zones as well as to the rebels.

However, thorough investigations and timely, fair prosecutions have been all too rare.

Beyond individual violations, the Ugandan government's policies also bear direct political responsibility for the long failure to end the war.

While mato oput can address individual offences of non-state actors, it is not a suitable vehicle for probing the state's failures and violations.

Ugandans want to see these national issues addressed publicly within the country, not only in Juba.

For too long conflicts have held back African hopes. Victims have been helpless to stop abusive armies and warlords.



The LRA has begun returning to neutral camps under the truce

Ending war is an absolute priority for today's victims and for future generations. Yet insisting on formal justice could easily thwart peace efforts.

Uganda should demonstrate that ideological and procedural tensions between international criminal justice and the continent's aspirations for local solutions to its problems can be resolved without condoning impunity.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5382816.stm>

## ***Appendix 7: Additional Works Referenced and Resources***

<http://www.mapquest.com/atlas/main.adp?region=uganda>

<http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/uganda.htm>

<http://www.mercycorps.org/silentdisasters/ugandadisplacement/1648>

*See Project Uganda: Optional Materials for more supplementary resources.*