

TV UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

U.N. IN ACTION

Week of 22 May 2006

Programme No. 1010

Length: 4'30"

THE TERRIBLE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN IN NORTHERN UGANDA

VIDEO

STREET CHILDREN/ DISPLACED
CAMP

COPLAND ON-CAMERA
UNICEF OFFICE, GULU

OKELLO AT HOME

AUDIO

NARRATION

It's one of the world's worst places to be a child. Northern Uganda, the setting of a little known conflict that has been going on for 20 years. Used as soldiers and sex-slaves, an estimated 30 thousand children have been abducted by the L.R.A. or Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel group fighting Uganda's Armed Forces. In the region's largest city, Gulu, the effect of the war on children has been catastrophic. Michael Copland, Head of Gulu's UNICEF Office. (32)

COPLAND:

"I have never seen anywhere such large numbers of unsupervised children. Children who are looking after other children, who literally have no family, who fend for themselves." (11)

NARRATION

In many ways, 13 year-old Okello Patrick considers himself lucky. He still has a family... Okello, a gentle and polite young man, had his

NARRATION

life turned upside down three years ago. (12)

OKELLO:

OKELLO ON-CAMERA

“The rebels came to our home. I was captured and taken to the bush. My parents were killed together with my brother and sister.” (8)

NARRATION

ARCHIVE, CHILD SOLDIERS

Child soldiers are a global tragedy. In Uganda children have been fighting adult's wars for a generation. And in recent years, L.R.A. brutality against children has reached new heights. Detachments made up predominantly of child soldiers surround settlements and move in to steal food and abduct children. These attacks are often accompanied by ritual murders in which children are forced to kill their parents or other children. (27.5)

MORE OKELLO AT HOME

Okello stayed with the L.R.A. for one year. One day during a firefight he ran away. He hid in the bush for one week and nearly starved. He was found and brought back to Gulu. (11.5)

ODWAR AND CHILDREN

Odwar George cares for nine kids. Four are his biological children. Five are children of his brothers and sisters who lost their lives because of war or HIV/AIDS. (10.5)

ODWAR GEORGE:

ODWAR GEORGE ON-CAMERA

“When I heard that Okello managed to escape his captors, my heart told me that I had to take care of him.” (6.5)

NARRATION

ODWAR AT HOME/CHILDREN IN
SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Odwar, who is displaced himself and survives on food aid, cannot afford school uniforms and shoes for all nine children. In spite of his wish to become a doctor, Okello does not attend school. (11.5)

BOYS WALKING
TOGETHER/SHELTER

As the sun hangs low on the horizon, Okello and two of his cousins walk for one hour to Gulu’s centre. Together with tens of thousands of others they seek safety in numbers. Night commuters is the name given to these children who trek nightly to the relative safety of urban centres because of the threat of attacks and abductions. They go to Noah’s Ark, a shelter for boys and girls supported by UNICEF. For Okello the shelter represents the difference between life and death. (30)

OKELLO PATRICK:

OKELLO PATRICK ON-CAMERA

“I come to the shelter every night. I am scared of being taken again. If the L.R.A. finds out that I escaped I will be killed...” (8)

NARRATION

CHILDREN WATCH MOVIE/PLAY

Tonight, the 1,200 children seeking refuge at Noah’s Ark enjoy a comedy movie. It’s a

NARRATION

welcome departure from a routine of violence and despair. Some children take the opportunity to play, while a few concentrate on homework. Once the movie is over, they go to sleep. (16)

CHILDREN GET UP, LEAVE SHELTER

A new day breaks and most of the night commuters begin the trek back home. Some will spend the day wandering around the streets of Gulu to return to the shelter later in the evening. Okello has been fortunate. The support of his remaining relatives has helped him deal with the brutal reality he has to face. Like thousands of other children in northern Uganda, he is the innocent victim of this most cruel of wars... (25)

UN LOGO

This report was prepared by the United Nations.
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