

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU

Please print off the following five pages to leave with your Member of Congress or the staff person that you meet with.

That way, they know exactly what you want from them, and can continue referring back to it if they forget.

There are three documents that you should print out:

- The basic one-pager that covers what we're asking for, which is the most important document for you to review ("U.S. Action for Peace in Uganda and an End to Child Soldiering");
- A paper that goes more in-depth on northern Uganda, in case the member of Congress or staff person wants to read more about what's happening there and how they can help ("Key U.S. Action for Sustainable Peace in Northern Uganda and the Region"); and
- A paper that goes more in-depth on child soldiers and the Child Soldier Prevention Act that we are asking them to support ("The Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007")

The most important document is the first. In one page, it covers all the basics, and if all that you say in the meeting is what is written on that one page, that's a big success!

U.S. Action for Peace in Uganda and an End to Child Soldiering

BACKGROUND

For the past twenty-one years, the people of northern Uganda and the surrounding region have endured a conflict between the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda. This conflict has destabilized parts of three separate countries and caused one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises. Nearly two million people have been forced into squalid displacement camps that lack basic services. Tens of thousands of children have been forcibly conscripted into rebel ranks, and rebel activity threatens peace agreements in both Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Children have been similarly forced into being soldiers in other parts of the world. Up to 250,000 children are exploited each day in national armies, paramilitaries and guerilla groups around the globe. They serve as combatants, porters, human mine detectors and sex slaves. Some of these children serve in the armies or government-supported paramilitaries of nations that receive U.S. foreign military financing and other military assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Peace in Northern Uganda:* Ongoing peace negotiations hosted and mediated by the Government of South Sudan provide the best hope yet to end the war. However, without additional external support and leverage, particularly from the United States, the negotiations are unlikely to achieve a durable agreement. The U.S. State Department is in the process of appointing a senior level advisor to engage the situation. The American people and their representatives in Congress must call upon the State Department to ensure that the diplomat appointed is based in the war-affected region and has a strong mandate that includes directly engaging ongoing negotiations and regional peace efforts.

→**ACTION ONE:** Please call Eunice Reddick, Director for East Africa at the State Department Africa Bureau at (202) 647-5242 and urge that the State Department immediately designate a senior official to support peace efforts in northern Uganda who is based in the region and who has a mandate that includes direct engagement of ongoing negotiations.

- *Ending Child Soldiers Worldwide:* The Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007 is designed to encourage governments to disarm, demobilize, and rehabilitate child soldiers from government forces and government-supported militias. This bill would place limits on the provision of U.S. International Military Education and Training, Foreign Military Financing, and other defense-related assistance for countries in violation of the bill's standards.

→**ACTION TWO:** Co-sponsor and vote "yes" for the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007 (S.1175 in the Senate and H.R. 3028 in the House of Representatives).

For additional information, please contact:

Alison Jones, Director of Advocacy for Resolve Uganda (Northern Uganda): alison@resolveuganda.org; 202-548-2517
Joseph Mettimano, Director of Policy for World Vision (Child Soldiers): jmettima@worldvision.org; 202-572-6300

Sponsors:



Additional Information on Uganda: Key U.S. Actions for Sustainable Peace in Northern Uganda and the Region

For the past twenty-one years, the people of northern Uganda and the surrounding region have endured a conflict between the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda. This conflict has destabilized parts of three separate countries and caused one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises. Nearly two million people have been forced into squalid displacement camps that lack basic services. Tens of thousands of children have been forcibly conscripted into rebel ranks, and rebel activity threatens peace agreements in both Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ongoing peace negotiations hosted and mediated by the Government of South Sudan provide the best hope yet to end the war. Already, due to increased humanitarian access and expanded freedom of movement for displaced people, the talks have led to gradual improvements in the lives of war-affected communities. However, without additional external support and leverage, particularly from the United States, the negotiations are unlikely to achieve a durable agreement.

Securing lasting peace should be the primary goal. Significant challenges also remain in addressing emergency-level humanitarian conditions and in planning for effective post-conflict peace building and development. Addressing the deteriorating humanitarian and security crisis in the northeastern region of Karamoja is also essential to ensuring peace throughout the region.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- **Use U.S. resources and leverage in the region to secure a sustainable peace deal:**

The United States has lacked a stated policy toward the negotiations process since it began in July of 2006. The U.N., African Union, and European Union are all directly supporting the ongoing efforts of the Government of South Sudan to secure a peace agreement, but the United States – which has significant clout in the region – has opted to play a role largely limited to private consultations with the government of Uganda. With the peace talks at a critical point, the United States needs to publicly demonstrate its interest in consolidating peace in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. Immediate action steps should include increasing diplomatic engagement of the talks in consultation with the mediator and U.N. Special Envoy, appointing an official U.S. observer, making available financial and technical assistance, and making high-level statements in support of the peace process. U.S. engagement will be crucial to addressing the regional dynamics of the crisis and providing guarantees for any agreement that is reached.
- **Ensure both short-term and long-term relief recovery plans are developed, funded, and implemented appropriately, by:**
 - *Improving humanitarian conditions:* Approximately 1.4 million people remain in the original displacement camps or newly developed “satellite” camps. Living conditions remain poor, and basic services are still severely lacking in both new and old settlements. While the Ugandan government must ensure that the northern population has equal access to basic services, the United States can do more to meet the immediate needs of displaced and returning communities.
 - *Using diplomatic and financial resources to support long-term recovery plans:* As internally-displaced persons (IDPs) begin to return home, the United States should use financial and diplomatic resources to encourage safe and voluntary return, ensure respect for land rights, help restore basic livelihoods, and assist in reintegrating former combatants, especially children. The United States should also help demilitarize the region and address protection gaps by supporting the deployment of civilian police, the development of the

judicial system, and the establishment of a viable mechanism for post-conflict justice and reconciliation.

- *Expanding focus to Karamoja:* Violent raids by cattle rustlers from the Karamoja region continue to create insecurity in northern Uganda, while a growing conflict between the Ugandan military and Karamojong warriors has caused civilian casualties, displacement, and worsening humanitarian conditions. Providing additional resources to address Karamoja's humanitarian crisis and reviewing the Ugandan government's forced disarmament strategy are immediately needed to address this threat to regional security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration:

1. Immediately designate a senior official to coordinate U.S. support for the ongoing negotiations and efforts to achieve sustainable peace and development in the region.
2. Utilize existing regional diplomatic capacity to maintain a consistent presence as an official observer to the negotiations, providing support to the mediation effort as needed.
3. Issue high-level statements of support for the talks as the process continues.
4. Send high-level delegations to visit northern Uganda and southern Sudan to demonstrate the priority status of this crisis.
5. Contribute sufficient funding for the peace process through the UN Juba Initiative Fund, administered by UNOCHA.
6. Immediately devote humanitarian resources to the Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda.
7. Assist in coordinating a regional protection strategy to deal with the threat of resumed hostilities, ensuring that national armies in the region act within their own borders.
8. Encourage the Government of Uganda to fully fund and implement its IDP Policy to facilitate the safe and voluntary return of displaced people, as well as its Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), which outlines the imperative for the demilitarization and development of the region.

U.S. Congress:

1. Hold a public hearing to examine the U.S. response to the crisis in the north and its involvement in ongoing peace negotiations.
2. Direct increased resources to support:
 - Ongoing regional peace efforts;
 - An expanded humanitarian response that addresses emergency and longer-term needs; and
 - A peaceful resolution to the conflict including support for children affected by this conflict, including the reintegration of child soldiers and other combatants; support for community reconciliation, justice system reform, provision of peace incentive packages for combatants and compensation for victims; and a multilateral initiative to end all assistance to the LRA.

Additional Information on the Child Soldiers Bill:
The Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007

SENATE LEAD SPONSORS (S. 1175): Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Sam Brownback (R-KS)
COSPONSORS (as of August 1, 2007): Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-PA), Tom Coburn (R-OK), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Susan Collins (R-ME), Russ Feingold (D-WI), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Tim Johnson (D-SD), John Kerry (D-MA), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Jack Reed (D-RI), Pat Roberts (R-KS), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)

HOUSE LEAD SPONSOR (H.R. 3028): Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE)
COSPONSORS (as of August 1, 2007): Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ), Donald M. Payne (D-NJ)

Q: What Problem is Being Addressed?

A: Up to 250,000 children are exploited each day in state-run armies, paramilitaries and guerilla groups around the world. Called “child soldiers,” they serve as combatants, porters, human mine detectors and sex slaves. Their health and lives are endangered and their childhoods are sacrificed. Some of these children serve in the armies or government-supported paramilitaries of nations that receive U.S. foreign military financing and other military assistance. These countries and these children are the focal points of this legislation.

Q: What is the Goal and Strategy of the Bill?

A: *The Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007* is designed to encourage governments to disarm and rehabilitate child soldiers from government forces and government-supported militias. This bill would place limits on the provision of U.S. defense-related assistance in our foreign aid programs for countries in violation of the bill’s standards. Countries that are clearly identified as recruiting or using child soldiers in government armed forces or government-supported paramilitaries or militias in violation of international standards would be eligible only for military assistance to address the issue of child soldiers and otherwise professionalize their armed forces until the problem is remedied.

Q: Why Was This Bill Introduced?

A: U.S. military assistance should not go to finance the use and exploitation of children in armed conflict. Such practices directly contravene the goals of our country. It is also in our own national security interest to reduce the incidence of child soldiers in the world, especially as our military leaders do not want U.S. troops to confront the specter of an armed child in a combat situation. The proposed bill is in alignment with U.S. policies and goals to help professionalize military bodies abroad.

Children suffer higher mortality, disease, and injury rates in combat situations than adults. The lasting effects of war and abuse may also remain with them long after the shooting stops. Both girls and boys may be stigmatized and traumatized by their experience and left with neither family connections nor skills to allow them to transition successfully into productive adult lives. This bill both underscores the importance of the issue within United States foreign policy and provides concrete means and incentives to help countries end their reliance on children as soldiers.

Q: What U.S. Foreign Assistance Programs Are Involved?

A: The programs involved are known as Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), Excess Defense Articles (EDA), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and Foreign Military Financing (FMF).

Q: What Countries May Be Affected?

A: Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Uganda could potentially be affected.

Q: Does the Bill Include Waivers, a Phase-In Period, or “Safety Valves?”

A: The bill takes into account that there may be circumstances that require flexibility to allow for strategic military engagement or diplomatic positioning or other national interests. This bill will not automatically cut off aid to countries that are identified as using or tolerating child soldiers. Countries that are seeking to implement demobilization measures would be eligible for assistance in that process and in the professionalization of their armed forces for up to two years before prohibitions on assistance would be imposed. Moreover, the bill provides the President of the United States with the authority to waive restrictions if he determines that such a waiver is in the national interest.

Q: Doesn't the U.S. allow 17 year olds to serve?

A: In 2000, the United Nations adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, obliging governments to take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces that have not attained the age of 18 do not take a direct part in hostilities, and prohibiting any compulsory recruitment of children under the age of 18 into governmental armed forces, or any recruitment (whether forcible or “voluntary”) or use in hostilities of children under age 18 by non-state armed forces. The Optional Protocol allows government armed forces to accept volunteers into their armed forces from age 16, with certain safeguards such as parental permission and informed consent.

The United States ratified this treaty in December 2002, and subsequently, the U.S. armed forces adopted new deployment policies to prevent the use of seventeen-year old soldiers in combat situations. In fact, in order to meet U.S. legal obligations, the policies adopted by the armed services are quite restrictive: the US Army's policy is not to assign or deploy soldiers less than 18 years of age outside of the continental United States, Puerto Rico or territories or possessions of the United States. The U.S. Navy will not assign members under age 18 to commissioned vessels or operational squadrons. Instead, it will extend training or assign soldiers to shore duty until they turn 18.