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### **Uganda: Establishing Food Security by Ending the War and Continuing Peace**

With the population ever increasing and farmland ever shrinking, this generation is faced with the challenge of feeding more on less. Currently, it is estimated that out of the global population of six billion people, more than one billion people still suffer from critical effects of food insecurity. By the year 2050, it is estimated that the world population will increase to nine billion people. Attention has been given to finding solutions to this current food insecurity problem as well as for future concerns through the means of researching new crop varieties and livestock genetics, adapting farm practices to reduce and better manage water supplies, responding to climate change, establishing sustainable agricultural practices, improving market trades, and diminishing discrimination. Uganda is an East African country with a population of 31.6 million people that suffers from a severe food insecurity crisis. Uganda's situation can be accredited to the on-going civil war and its disastrous after-effects. Humanitarian relief and food aid organizations have focused much attention and have created a huge impact on the people of Uganda; however, in order to best establish food security in Uganda, countries must engage in diplomatic initiatives to end the war in Uganda and establish a democratic government. After establishing and maintaining peace in the future, only then can it be possible for Ugandan people to develop and incorporate sustainable agricultural practices suitable for supporting itself. It is, after all, up to the smallholders to feed everyone else.

Uganda is in an emergency-state food insecurity crisis due to several causes, but the war has caused the most damage to Uganda's agricultural and governmental independence. Called the "most neglected humanitarian emergency in the world today", Africa's longest running war has turned Uganda into a hell on earth. Not only has it been affecting the entire country, it has also inflicted serious damage on bordering countries like Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Kenya. One person has created an army, and has ended and ruined lives of millions, and has affected so many more in the ripples of war.

Joseph Kony is one of the top criminals wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the atrocities he has committed. He has been leading the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda for twenty-three years – attempting to gain control of southern Uganda. When he lost all support, he began to brutally attack his own people and abduct children – forcing them to carry out his work. According to the Invisible Children Organization, 90% of his forces are made up of abducted children. Throughout the duration of the war, 60,000 children have been abducted, and forced against their wills to massacre entire villages, abduct other children, and mutilate people by cutting off lips, noses, ears, and gouging out eyes as punishments for those who opposed the LRA (History).

As a result of the massacres, complete villages and farmland have been destroyed. The massacres have also forced 1.8 million people to be placed in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps by the Ugandan government in an attempt to provide their people with protection. Displacement camps are only one step up in solving the problem, but one thousand people die in each camp every week (Agency Work). This temporary solution is not enough. The war must be stopped.

While it may sound easy enough to arrest Joseph Kony and end the war, it seems more appropriate to deem it an impossible feat. Since 1991, UN leaders and others, as well as LRA leaders, have

come together for peace talks and negotiations without success. In 2006 in Juba, Sudan, they tried again but they have failed because Kony continues to back out. They ended after it was discovered that Kony was using the money and humanitarian help from the Juba talks to regain strength. That stopped the efforts of many involved in the Juba talks to arrest him. Even though Kony has said, “I seek not to fight with the Uganda government, I am going to see that everything is perfect, there is going to be peace.”, he has responded to each proposed peace agreement by massacring more villages, abducting more children, and killing more innocent people. (The Rescue) Since then, the Juba talks have ended. It is also why the Final Peace Agreement – aimed at finally ending the war – failed in March 2008; it is still awaiting Kony’s signature.

The peace talks have not been completely unsuccessful. They have allowed 900,000 (50%) of the displaced persons to return home – where they face more concerns about access to clean water, economic opportunities, health centers, and education without the aid that was given in the displacement camps. The Food and Agriculture Organization has been training these IDPs to resume sustainable crop and livestock production, increase food availability in Uganda, and become more self-reliant for food. They are working to establish and run Farm Field Schools in attempts of raising mass amounts of cassava and sweet potato production, as well as increasing efficient livestock production. These Farm Field Schools are fields where FAO officials teach Uganda farmers better soil and water conservation methods as well as pest control. It also allows farmers a chance to experiment with different solutions of their own. The FAO has also been working to prevent losses due to conflict of war, drought spells, floods, natural disasters, and livestock disease (Consolidated Appeals).

Initially, the United States government had not been very involved with the war in Uganda and the food insecurity crisis there. After the Invisible Children rally in Washington, D.C., in 2004 – where tens of thousands of American teenagers wrote letters – Congress passed the Northern Uganda Crisis Response Act. It is the first piece of American legislature to address it. In 2007, when IC hosted another rally, the United States Department appointed Tim Shortly to be the Senior Advisor on the Conflict in Africa, where he joined in with the peace talks in Juba to try to find a way to peacefully end the war.

Joseph Kony must be stopped. The war needs to end in a way that does not hurt any more people. One proposed solution is to isolate him. According to the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, the ICC has proposed cutting off all food supplies and aid to the rebel army. This will not work. This plan only critically affects the abducted children that are making up his forces. When they die, Kony will only replace them. Until the war is over, other countries that can lend support and provide materials must take action. Until Ugandan people can start to rebuild their lives and begin sustainable agricultural practices, the United States and other countries need to continue sending food and funding organizations that are working towards doing so. Even with all of this outside help, the food insecurity rate in Uganda will keep increasing throughout the duration of the war.

Not only has the warfare interrupted entire villages and has torn through fields – stunting yield productivity, it has also heightened other obstacles of Ugandan agriculture. Lack of knowledge and access to new technological advancements in agriculture to increase production, a weak market, poverty, disease, and low yields are also obstacles heaped onto Uganda’s agricultural sector (FAO). Some generations of Ugandans have spent their entire lives in displacement camps, and have no farming experience to fall back on when they eventually are able to return home.

In an Invisible Children documentary interview, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, shares his view, “It is interesting how things are changing... The

issue is how people learn, how to be more effective. It is not enough to lobby your own government. You have to go to the global system and that is something we are learning. It's a new world. It's a 21<sup>st</sup> century situation... This concept is for young people. So for people my age, 55 this is too incredible. For people that are like 25, it's normal. So that's why we need them. We need these young guys that understand. For them, the world is their community. And that is why we need... [It is] very important to connect all these young people from all over the world. Think of this. Who has interest in the Ugandans? No one. They have no oil, nothing to win. So how much effort do we put there? Not a lot. Just as you move there, then they will put efforts." (The Rescue).

This is very accurate. Today, many people do not put in a lot of effort into something unless a personal gain comes from it. Many do not care about something unless they can connect with it in a tangible, personal way. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is all about the media and technology. Most of the top issues in the news and media focus on national issues. While Americans are concerned about their future healthcare and finances, there are people in other parts of the world that are just trying to survive – desperately trying to keep their families together. There are numerous websites, videos, essays, documentaries, and articles about Uganda and its situation, but since it is so far away, it takes the back seat.

Therefore, it is necessary to remove Uganda's situation from the backburner by informing and involving today's youth with global issues such as this so that changes can be made and future conflicts can be prevented. It must be clear to all that establishing peace in Uganda is crucial for any chance for Uganda to rebuild and organize itself. This can only be done by getting Kony to come through on his end of the peace agreement. A larger awareness of the situation in Uganda may pressure him into finally consenting with a peace agreement. A second option, which should only be considered if, and only if, the first option fails, would be to devise a mission in which the UN sends troops to arrest Kony. After Kony is out of the picture, action can be taken to improve the circumstances in Uganda.

A democratic government must first be established – organizing itself into a well-developed country. A unified government is crucial to the process of reform and the continuation of peace. Countries, such as the United States, can make a huge difference in Uganda by helping them form a structured democratic government system. By developing a strong democratic government, a legal system can be established to maintain peace and give all citizens equal rights.

Once an organized government is established, the Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) can be put into action. The PMA is a plan for the Ugandan government to pull itself out of a food insecurity crisis by transforming the way of farming – from a sole means of survival for few to a substantial commercial means (FAO). Therefore, smallholders can produce enough to feed themselves and sell the rest to turn a profit. "Commercializing agriculture is hoped to result into many people being able to earn incomes to meet other needs, improve their lifestyle, create more jobs in rural areas, ensure food security and use natural resources sustainably." (FAO). The government will play a key role in the PMA as it will be needed to provide "agricultural advisory services, health services, good roads, access to improved seed and knowledge and information about good storage methods, processing and marketing avenues." (FAO).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF) is also attempting to advance Uganda through improving its agricultural sector. Its mission is "to support efforts to commercialize the Agricultural sector, including value addition, with the specific mandate of the Ministry being to support, promote and guide production of crops, livestock and fisheries, through provision of services primarily focused on resource-poor farmers/fisher folk." (Forum). It also

supports the PMA in its attempts of accomplishing this. The MAAIF is using the fact that agriculture is one of Uganda's leading industries – employing 80% of the country's population. By increasing crop yield, it hopes to not only feed itself, but also produce enough crops to turn a profit (Forum).

Only after diplomatic measures are taken can Ugandan smallholders begin a new approach to practice sustainable agricultural practices. Peace must be restored and a democratic government must be established in order for the country to get back on its feet. Once an organized government is formed, land can be redistributed so that villages and families can begin farming and the PMA can be carried out. The Food and Agricultural Organization can commence Farm Field Schools – where sustainable agricultural practices are taught to maximize crop yields. Creating a market to surrounding countries will also pull Uganda out of a severe food insecurity crisis. This feat requires outside aid from countries, such as the United States, that have structured governments, influence in the United Nations, and advanced agricultural knowledge and technology. Involvement of future leading generations world-wide is also a necessity – seeing that they are vital to change for the future. However, the number one approach to pave the way for Uganda to redevelop itself is through establishing policies and diplomatic agreements for a cease-fire – allowing Ugandans the opportunity to utilize their land to become self-reliant on food. Farm schools can effectively teach sustainable agricultural practices. Peace is critical to allow Ugandan smallholders to feed their people.

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