

WorldVision

WINTER 2005



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CHILDREN IN PERIL

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World Vision

WHO WE ARE

World Vision is a Christian relief and development organization dedicated to helping children and their communities work to their full potential by tackling the cause of poverty.

WHO WE SERVE

Motivated by our faith in Jesus, we serve the poor—regardless of a person's religion, ethnicity, or gender—as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people.

WHY WE SERVE

Our passion is for the world's poorest people whose suffering breaks the heart of God. We help secure a better future for each child by focusing on lasting, community-based transformation. We partner with individuals and communities to empower them to develop sustainable solutions. We provide access to clean water, food supplies, health care, education, and economic opportunities.

HOW WE SERVE

Since 1950, World Vision has helped millions of children and families by providing emergency assistance to those affected by natural disasters and civil conflict, developing long-term solutions within communities to alleviate poverty, and advocating for justice on behalf of the poor.

YOU CAN HELP

Partnering with World Vision provides many ways to honor God and put faith into action. By working together, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of children and families who are struggling to overcome poverty. To find out how you can help, see page 4, return the envelope found between pages 8 and 9, or visit www.worldvision.org.



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ON THE COVER

When once trapped in Uganda's
civil war find solace at
World Vision's center.

Photograph by Jon Warren

World Vision, a free quarterly
publication, affirms people responding
to God's call to care for the poor by
providing information, inspiration, and
opportunities for action, linking them
to children and families in nearly 100
countries where World Vision ministers.
In our effort to be careful stewards of our
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Welcome your comments and/or
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Correction:

Regarding the Autumn
2005 article on Chagas
disease, two sharp-
eyed readers notified

editors that the parasite-carrying bug
is not a beetle, as stated. Rather, it belongs
to a specific group of insects called
"hemiptera." Thank you for reading.

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CHANGE YOUR *world*

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Ways to TAKE ACTION with World Vision



- 1 **FAMILY SPONSORSHIP**
Break the cycle of poverty and sponsor a family.
- 2 **A CHILD IS WAITING**
Show your church how to make a difference through child sponsorship.
- 3 **30 HOUR FAMINE**
Get your school or youth group to join the fight against hunger.
- 4 **LOVE LOAF**
Help your congregation learn about poverty by collecting offerings.
- 5 **REACHING OUT TO THE POOR**
Let World Vision help your church reach out to the poor.
- 6 **ONE LIFE REVOLUTION**
Help your youth group combat HIV/AIDS.
- 7 **WOMEN OF VISION**
Advocate for women in developing countries.
- 8 **U.S. PROGRAMS**
Discover what World Vision is doing for U.S. children and teens.
- 9 **ADVOCACY**
Speak up for the poor and powerless.
- 10 **MATCHING GIFTS**
Learn how your employer can match your contribution to World Vision.
- 11 **SCHOOLTOOLS**
Discover ways your group can provide essential school supplies to children in need.
- 12 **GET A KICK OUT OF SHARING**
Donate soccer balls for children in need.
- 13 **ARTIST ASSOCIATES**
Help Christian artists promote child sponsorship by volunteering at a local concert.

- 14 **CHILD AMBASSADOR**
Help find new child sponsors in your local community.

CHANGEagent



Name: Charlie Ambroselli, 28.
Home: Atlanta, Ga.

Occupation: Accountant

Program: Child Ambassador

Buzz: Six weeks promoting child sponsorship outside Wal-Mart stores in church saw Charlie sign up more than 40 new child sponsors.

"I am a Child Ambassador because I am called to live the Scriptures. The Bible is God's story, using leaders to love and deliver his people from bondage, sickness, and poverty."

- 15 **VISION VILLAGES**
Work alongside families in Honduras to build new homes.
- 16 **TEAM WORLD VISION**
Use your sports or fitness to help children affected by HIV/AIDS.
- 17 **EMPLOYMENT**
Find out about fulfilling careers with World Vision.
- 18 **DISCOVER WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST**
Simple steps to a personal relationship with Jesus.

To find out more, go to www.worldvision.org/change, or call toll free (888) 852-4453.

ut Now I See'

MOST CHRISTIANS KNOW the background to one of the most popular hymns in the



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

Pray Now!



Children in northern Uganda are suffering. You can help.

The brutal rebel group called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) uses demonic warfare to sustain a 19-year conflict in northern Uganda (see story on page 12). The LRA abducts innocent children and forces them to become soldiers or sex slaves. Children are tortured, maimed, brainwashed, and killed in the rebels' clutches. Only prayer and the power of Jesus working through peacemakers will end their suffering and bring peace.



OUR PRAYERS are crucial to battling this spiritual warfare. Please join with other Christians in the United States to pray for an end to the conflict.

The LRA uses demonic rituals to frighten kidnapped children into servitude and to continue their destructive warfare. **PRAY** that the Lord will break the LRA's spiritual stronghold over the region.

PRAY for God's protection and strength for all World Vision staff ministering to children and families in northern Uganda.

PRAY for an end to the war—that kidnapped children will be able to return home to their families and that displaced families will be able to rebuild their lives.

To take further action on northern Uganda, write to President George W. Bush. See the insert between pages 28 and 29 for details.



PHOTOS BY JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

es like Armenia awakens

child, but it's unlikely that she will be raise and educate him without help. the home front, our youngest ; Grace, had her braces removed. after I received this news, I visited ery where graves had been dug I World Vision staff explained that inearth corpses to steal the gold buy food.

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Rick Warren

Detach and display this card as a reminder to pray.

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5 REACHING OUT TO THE WORLD

Let World Vision help your church reach out to the world.

6 ONE LIFE REVOLUTION

Help your youth group connect with the world.

7 WOMEN OF VISION

Advocate for women in development.

8 U.S. PROGRAMS

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9 ADVOCACY

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10 MATCHING GIFTS

Learn how your employer can match your contribution to World Vision.

11 SCHOOLTOOLS

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12 GET A KICK OUT OF SPORTS

Donate soccer balls for children in need.

13 ARTIST ASSOCIATES

Help Christian artists promote World Vision by volunteering at a local concert.

Other Ways to Help

Urge President George W. Bush to make this forgotten humanitarian crisis a **priority**. Turn to the insert between pages 28 and 29, and detach and mail the card provided.



Visit www.seekjustice.org to learn about World Vision's **advocacy efforts** to send a similar letter to your members of Congress. You may also **register** to learn more about how your world vision is being shared with policy makers.

World Vision

We appreciate your partnership in protecting the world's oppressed and vulnerable people.



What Now I See'

MOST CHRISTIANS KNOW the background to one of the most popular hymns in the English language, "Amazing Grace"—how its author, John Newton, wrote it in the 1700s after his conversion during a storm at sea.

Interestingly, John Newton's faith didn't cause an immediate life change. At the time, he worked on slave ships that transported Africans to the New World with cruel efficiency, as if human beings were mere cargo. He continued this work for several years after becoming a Christian. Only later did he feel remorse for it. It wasn't until long after he wrote, "Was blind, but now I see," that he finally lived up to the line.

It's possible for Christians to be deeply committed to Christ yet remain blind to injustice in our world, especially those of us insulated by our comfortable culture. But God asks us to open our eyes. My involvement with World Vision has helped cure my blindness as I witness close-up the shocking realities of life in the developing world.

For example, last year I traveled to Armenia, a country in economic collapse since the downfall of the Soviet Union. There are few jobs, so men often go to other countries such as Russia to find work, leaving women and children to fend for themselves. Damage from a 1988 earthquake gives the landscape an eerie, apocalyptic aura.



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

Witnessing poverty in places like Armenia awakens our compassion.

keep the child, but it's unlikely that she will be able to raise and educate him without help.

On the home front, our youngest daughter, Grace, had her braces removed. The day after I received this news, I visited a cemetery where graves had been dug up. Local World Vision staff explained that people unearth corpses to steal the gold teeth to buy food.

I was struck by the stark contrasts between my ordinary life and what's considered ordinary in Armenia. Before my visit, it would have been hard to believe that there's a place where mothers try to sell their children, where desecrating the dead is the price some people pay for their next meal. But now I see.

Overseas travel isn't the only way to see the world's needs. I hope that your eyes and heart will be opened as you read about children trapped in Uganda's brutal civil war and Mexican youth living on the streets (see pages 12-27). Many people might want to turn a blind eye to such

tragic situations, but those of us touched by God's amazing grace cannot. ■



"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."
—Mark 10:51

While there, I called my wife, Renéé, to see how things were going at home. She told me that the air conditioning had broken down. Because it was August (even Seattle has its heat waves), this seemed a great inconvenience. But I had just visited a family living in rural Gehargkunik for whom temperature control is an unimaginable luxury. Their small house has only ragged plastic over the windows and no insulation against cold weather—which in Armenia can mean 40 degrees below zero. The previous winter this family pulled up the wooden floorboards and burned them to stay alive.

Back at home, Renéé reported, our younger children were getting ready to go back to school. Armenia boasts high national literacy, but in rural areas poverty erodes education standards because parents are focused on basic survival. In Gerhargkunik I heard about a woman who tried to sell her newborn baby in the market for \$50 because she couldn't care for him. World Vision staff eventually convinced her to

News From the Field



World Vision volunteers LaKisha Bivins (right) and Rusty Nawrocki, of Rock's Medical Outreach, help out at World Vision's warehouse, The Storehouse, in Dallas.

United States: Hurricane Havoc > World Vision responded to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita by shipping emergency goods to the Gulf Coast. The organization provided supplies for more than 10,000 survivors in the first week after Katrina. Blankets, clothing, water, personal care products, and other items donated by corporations enabled faith-based organizations to help families who lost everything in the back-to-back storms. World Vision continues to assist churches and local groups in the Gulf Coast with goods and financial support as they respond to the overwhelming number of evacuees.

North/Central America: Stan Slams > World Vision stepped up relief efforts in Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala after Hurricane Stan caused flooding and mudslides in October. The storm killed more than 600 people, displaced hundreds of thousands, and damaged roads. Local World Vision teams, many of whom had been trained for such an emergency, quickly delivered relief supplies to affected communities.

Uganda: First Lady Weeps > Uganda's first lady Janet Museveni was welcomed with songs and dance when she made a surprise visit to World Vision Children of War Rehabilitation Center. The center assists children formerly abducted into the Lord's Resistance Army and forced to commit atrocities. A tearful Museveni said she could hardly believe the lively children who greeted her were the same as those callously treated by rebels. "Their future can still be rebuilt, and we should all join hands in restoring their hopes and dreams," she said.

Bolivia: Civil Action > A wave of strikes and blockades prompted World Vision to deliver food and other essential supplies to hospitals, retirement homes, and prisons in La Paz. Children living with their jailed fathers were among those to benefit. The wave of civil unrest forced the resignation of President Carlos Mesa in June.

Indonesia: Legal Aid > A training course for community leaders will help tsunami survivors in Aceh resolve legal issues after they lost vital documents in the big waves. The course dealt with the problem of thousands returning to reclaim homes without evidence of ownership. World Vision and local government organizers hope the course will resolve disputes without recourse to the courts.





REJENA SAMPUL/WORLD VISION

India: Water Torture > World Vision rushed to deliver food and medical aid after Mumbai was deluged with unprecedented rains, causing massive flooding and landslides.

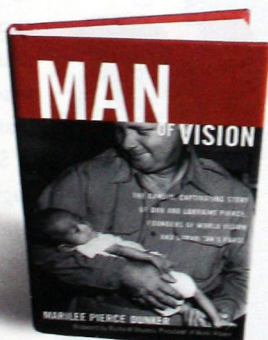
The agency delivered hot meals to hundreds who lost their homes and opened temporary health clinics to halt the spread of water-borne disease. More than 800 people died during the crisis.

India: Double Downpour > More flooding in India over the summer destroyed thousands of homes and displaced more than 12,000 people. World Vision contributed tents, sleeping bags, and hygiene items to the relief effort. Officials said the floods were even more severe than those that hit the west of the country in April—then credited with being the worst in 50 years.

China: Jolie Good > The publisher of the Chinese edition of *Notes from My Travels*, written by Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie, will donate part of the royalties to World Vision. The book recounts Jolie's visits to refugee camps in Africa and Asia as a UN ambassador for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Money raised will be channeled through World Vision's Indian office for emergency relief projects. ■

My Man of Vision

An insider's account of the life of Bob and Lorraine Pierce—founders of World Vision—written by their daughter, Marilee Pierce Dunker. A book filled with triumph, drama, and romance. At the same time, Dunker is honest about the personal struggles and intense spiritual warfare her parents faced—and the high price her family paid while her father struggled to fulfill the vision God gave him. A thoughtful Christmas gift. Order online at www.worldvisionresources.com or call (888) 852-4453.



Hope Update

Swapping Shoes

Before you judge someone, the saying goes, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That's the thinking behind the World Vision AIDS Experience, a 2,000-square-foot marquee that invites those who enter to live out the heartache, stigma, and hopes of people impacted by AIDS.

Through a series of audio and visual effects, visitors will briefly experience the suffering of an African mother, orphan, or child soldier reeling from the disease's devastation.

World Vision's Shawn Blossey says the aim is to do more than educate. "We did not want to simply bombard visitors with statistics. We were interested in giving people a real insight into what individuals have to cope with on a personal level," she says.

The AIDS Experience debuts at a series of Youth Specialties conferences for Christian youth leaders, and is planned to appear at other big events around the country.

Meanwhile, World Vision is encouraging churches, universities, youth groups, and schools to join in a national AIDS walk for the upcoming World AIDS Day (Dec. 1). The walk, to be held all over the country, will see participants take a step for each of the 6,000 children orphaned by AIDS every day. ■

— James Addis



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

Shawn Blossey checks a model of the AIDS Experience.

To book the AIDS Experience for an event near you, e-mail info@oneliferevolution.org.

To participate in the AIDS walk, or other AIDS-related events, go to www.worldvision.org/actingonaids.



News From the Field

L.A. Raw

An innovative outreach helps Skid Row moms keep their children from the gutt

by James Addis

In the street, weedy-looking drug pushers wrapped up in heavy coats offer “rock” to the gullible. Under-dressed hookers coyly ask, “Where you headin’?” to prospective clients. As evening approaches, the sidewalks fill with tents and cardboard boxes as Los Angeles’ homeless settle down for the night—some pushing their possessions around in supermarket carts. A heavily tattooed woman shouts obscenities to no one in particular. Another rests her head on a plastic bag filled with empty beer cans and sleeps like a baby.

Skid Row

This is Skid Row, Los Angeles—home to the largest concentration of homeless people in the United States, and ironically just six blocks from the financial center of the richest state in the country.

At the Ford Hotel—one of numerous run-down hotels in the neighborhood—Margarita Uitz clutches her children close and talks about her straitened circumstances. When her husband broke his arm and couldn’t work, the family’s fortunes spiraled rapidly downward. Now the seven of them are confined to two miniscule rooms. A bunk bed for five children takes up half the space in one room. The second room—the size of a walk-in-wardrobe—cramped with another bed, boxes of possessions, and an electric hotplate, where Margarita fixes family meals.

She recalls her former home in the Eagle Rock neighborhood of Los Angeles. There her children could play happily outside without her worrying. Now she never lets them out of sight.

“Here there are constant sirens, fire trucks, and police,” she says.

But for Margarita and dozens of other moms who have fallen on hard times, there is one place they know their children will always be welcome and safe. Central City Community Outreach on East 6th Street—a ministry supported by World Vision—opens its doors weekday afternoons to any child or teen wanting to escape a cramped room or the sleaze on the streets. Inside there’s an excited buzz

JAMES ADDIS/WORLD VISION

» **FAST FACT** 91,000 people live on the street or in temporary shelters in Los Angeles every night. (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority)



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➔ Upcoming Events

See the impact of AIDS ... build a house in Honduras ... do the 30 Hour Famine ... present child sponsorship to your church...

DECEMBER 2005

- > **1 World AIDS Day: Commit to fight AIDS,** www.worldvision.org/actingonaids or www.unaids.org
- > **1 World AIDS Day Women's Prayer Breakfast,** New York City, (866) 554-4483

JANUARY 2006

- > **28-Feb. 3 Vision Villages: Build a house for a family in Honduras,** www.worldvision.org/visionvillages



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

FEBRUARY 2006

- > **21-March 2 Pastor's Vision Trip: Join other pastors to see the impact of AIDS in East Africa,** www.worldvision.org/c2c
- > **24-25 30 Hour Famine: Fight hunger,** www.30hourfamine.org
- > **25-March 3 Vision Villages. Build a house for a family in Honduras,** www.worldvision.org/visionvillages

MARCH 2006

- > **18-24 Vision Villages: Build a house for a family in Honduras,** www.worldvision.org/visionvillages

APRIL 2006

- > **22-28 Vision Villages: Build a house for a family in Honduras,** www.worldvision.org/visionvillages
- > **25-May 4 Pastor's Vision Trip: Join other pastors to see the impact of AIDS in Southern Africa,** www.worldvision.org/c2c

Your gift in this envelope can help a child.
See details on the insert between pages 24 & 25.

News From

L.A. Raw

An innovative outreach helps
by James Addis

In the street, weedy-looking drug pushers in heavy coats offer “rock” to the gullible. Under dim streetlights, “Where you headin’?” to prospective clients. The sidewalks fill with tents and cardboard boxes. Homeless people settle down for the night—some in supermarket carts. A heavy rain falls on no one in particular. A homeless man shouts obscenities to no one in particular. A homeless man sits on a plastic bag filled with empty beer cans.

Skid Row



» **FAST FACT** 91,000 people live on temporary shelters in Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

World Vision



Monserrat, 13, is a street child in Mexico. Read her story on page 22. To find out how you can help, see the insert between pages 24 and 25.

What kind of Christmas will she have?



JAMES ADDIS/WORLD VISION

World Vision outreach worker Lynette "Diamond" Jenkins leads a STAND computer class.

Youngsters get help with homework, shoot hoops, connect to the internet, or hear a visiting speaker on the gospel or the dangers of drugs and gangs.

Central City regular Miranda*, 13, who until recently lived at a homeless shelter across the street, thinks the center is cool. "It's fun, I get to go on the computers, and I get to see my friends," she says. Miranda is part of Central City's STAND class—Striving to Achieve a New Destiny—a name chosen by the young people themselves to flag their resolution to escape their troubled circumstances. It's an attitude Miranda has internalized. Despite a tumultuous home life, including a series of evictions, she vows one day she will become a lawyer.

Her mom, Imelda*, says that kind of talk reflects the outreach's influence. She says Central City has been critical to keeping her children on the right track by modeling good behaviors and instilling their self-worth. "They come over here, they get their self-esteem back, and they get to kind of know they are not lonely in this world," she says.

Central City Executive Director Grady Martine believes the key to achieving this kind of transformation. He says when the ministry was founded 16 years ago, it was noted that a major gap of existing social services was that beneficiaries were treated like objects—made to line up for whatever hand-out was offered—but ignored as people. To Grady, such an approach is remedied, since those in dire straits often have no idea how to improve their situation. Take the typical young person arriving at Central City. "Many of her family are homeless," he says. "She sees drugs and alcohol addiction all around her, and most of the people she meets have not even graduated from high school."

To show such a person that there are alternatives, says Grady, involves spending time with them, sharing meals, and offering a listening ear—precisely what Central City aims to do.

Grady's favorite Gospel story is Christ's healing of the woman with severe bleeding, where Jesus is adamant he must speak with the person who touched him. "Yes, she got healed," he says, "but she also got heard and encouraged."

He says it's the example Central City aims to follow. "There's a big difference between someone who just gives out stuff and someone who cares about who you are." ■

*Names changed to protect identities.

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In the Spotlight

Church on a Mission

For Christ Presbyterian, it's personal. *by Jane Sutton-Redner*

During a church visit in 2001, Christ Presbyterian member Paul Perron embraces Ugandan pastors, and (facing page) Ron Mulder bonds with Allen Nakamate, 3.



NEARLY 8,000 MILES separate Edina, Minn., and Rakai, southern Uganda. The two places couldn't be more different. Eight to 10 inches of snow blanket Edina four months a year, while nary a snowflake has ever fallen in Rakai, just south of the Equator. The median age in suburban Edina is 44.5 years; in Rakai, considered the epicenter of East Africa's AIDS crisis, it's only 14.8.

One Edina church has figured out how to dramatically nar-

row the distance between the two communities. For more than 15 years, Christ Presbyterian Church has financially supported children and families in Rakai in personal ways—through friendship, prayer and yearly visits that have fostered change on both sides. Christ Presbyterian members sponsor 1,500 Rakai children through World Vision. More than 250 congregants have traveled to Africa, some several times. Even those who haven't gone feel close to their Ugandan "extended family."

"Our children have wept for kids in Africa who've had accidents or lost parents," says the Rev. John Crosby, Christ Presbyterian's senior pastor, whose own family sponsors six children there.

"Recently there was a mass kidnapping of children in Gulu, an area in northern Uganda," he continues. "It happened over the weekend, and between the time I reached church and entered the pulpit, five different people came up and asked me, 'Are those our kids? Are our kids OK?' They become our kids."

Personal interaction with sponsored children fuelled the desire to do more. Christ Presbyterian built schools, health clinics, and water tanks in Rakai and started a house-building campaign for children orphaned by AIDS. The church engaged additional partners to meet the overwhelming needs the pandemic created—securing legal services from the International Justice Mission to protect the rights of widows and orphans, and working with a local ministry

SIMON PETER RAKAI/WORLD VISION



JOHN WARREN/WORLD VISION (2)

street children in Kampala, Uganda's capital. Christ Presbyterian has demonstrated the power that one church out of 340,000 can have in raising the bar on ministry to the poor," says World Vision President Rich Stearns. "They led the tragedy of AIDS orphans a decade before the rest of the faith community knew there was a problem." Their voices attest to the church's impact. "We were living a very miserable life, staying without food sometimes. [We] had no good clothing, no bedding and other home requirements," says orphan Edward Kabogere Kayemba, from one of Rakai's 200 single-headed households. "But because of the support from Christ

Presbyterian Church, all these problems are met, and this has extremely improved and changed our lives as a family."

Christ Presbyterian's outreach to Africa began in the 1980s, when a group of Edina pastors went to Ethiopia to respond to the famine. Afterward, their support widened to other East African countries, with yearly teams continuing to build relationships overseas and drum up funds at home.

When John became pastor in 1990, Christ Presbyterian was enthusiastically missions-oriented but lacked resources. He helped direct energies to Uganda, specifically Rakai, through child sponsorship.

In 1999, Christ Presbyterian accepted World Vision's challenge to enter into a long-term partnership called the Rakai Orphans Support Project, allowing the church to improve the quality of life for the children in a more direct and holistic way. The project has energized the congregation. Frequent gatherings, video presentations, and Rakai-focused Sunday school curriculum give every member a personal connection to that far-off place of reddish soil and lush banana plants.

To John Crosby, this is something that not only any other church could do, but should do. "It's important that each congregation find their own place to embrace—their own soft spot in the heart that God can use to expand the kingdom of Heaven," he says. "The key, I think, is to personalize your experience, so that it's not just another check written by the rich for the poor." ■



SIRION PETER EKAKU/WORLD VISION

➔ Get Involved

WOULD YOU LIKE your church to engage with an overseas community? Take this article to your pastor and tell him or her about C2C, World Vision's program connecting U.S. churches with African children, communities, and churches on the front lines of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

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Sponsors can also use www.worldvision.org/ForSponsorsOnly to sign up to receive e-mail updates from World Vision, which includes information on sponsored children during an emergency and opportunities to get involved. Or you can give World Vision your email address by filling it in on the envelope between pages 8 and 9. ■





BY NIGEL MARSH / *Photographs by Jon Warren*

A LONG BUT LITTLE-KNOWN
INSURGENCY IN NORTHERN UGANDA
HAS SCARRED AN ENTIRE
GENERATION OF CHILDREN.

CHILDREN AT WAR

Above: Children who escape from captivity with the Lord's Resistance Army rebel group are encouraged to act out their experiences through play at World Vision's Children of War center.

Right: Stephen*, freed after more than six months with the rebels, has guarded optimism for his future (see his story on page 19).

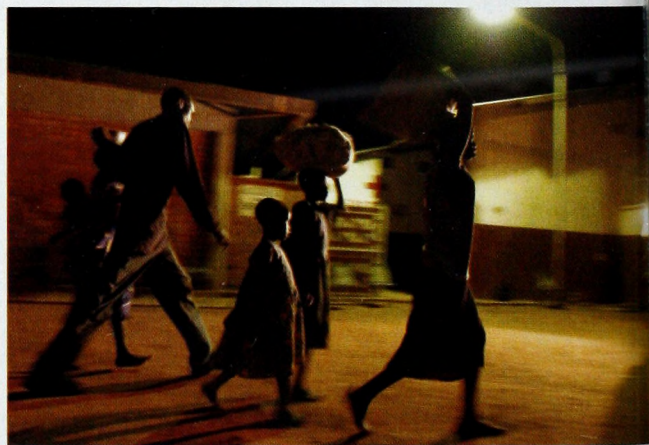




IT'S GROWING DARK as the sisters hurriedly finish their chores and prepare to leave home. Other children from the village of Forgod, northern Uganda, are already walking past outside, flitting ghosts disappearing into the gathering gloom.

Annette*, 12, sweeps around the packed-earth compound. Priscilla*, 11, straightens out their few possessions and tidies up the reed mats on the floor of their mud-and-thatch hut. Constance*, 5, stands at the door and watches, wide-eyed, clutching a thin, gray blanket.

The girls hate to go, but a tense knot in their stomachs urges them to join the Pied Piper's procession into the town of Gulu, a bit farther than a mile away. It has been more than a year since they dared to sleep at home.



This page: Night-commuting children—*and* some families—gather in rough quarters for the night, presuming that there's safety in numbers.

The girls finish. They close the rough wooden door, bid good-bye to the aunt who has cared for them since their parents died of AIDS, and briskly kiss their sickly baby sister.

Annette leads Constance by the hand down the dirt road. As they walk, red-stained cumulus clouds flicker menacingly with rain-season lightning. The girls soon become anonymous, swallowed up among dozens, hundreds, and finally thousands of other children, all walking into Gulu.

These are the “night commuters” of northern Uganda, a generation for whom “safety” means leaving adults behind and spending each night under canvas, in rough shelters, or on the verandas of schools and hospitals. They get little sleep on the hard, bare floors, and no food. What they seek is proximity to soldiers—any hint of protection from the child-stealing rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), who have terrorized this region since well before the girls were born.

Annette, Priscilla, and Constance arrive at Noah’s Ark, one of 20 organized centers for night commuters in town. Volunteer staff lead the children in singing and prayers, doing their best in the dark. There is a power cut, and their generator broke down long ago.

“Two weeks ago, we had 2,000 children a night, but at the moment it’s less than that,” says deputy manager Juliet Cherukut, watching as Annette and her sisters find floor space in a bare classroom. “The number depends on the security situation. Last year we had 300 children packed in each classroom

Below: Noah’s Ark, a shelter in Gulu, becomes the scene of a giant sleepover—without the fun. Bottom of page: Constance* and Priscilla* gaze out at an approaching storm.



and tent every night—7,000 children in total. They slept in rows, packed like sacks.”

One of the adult volunteers, Christine Ajok, has personal reasons for being there. “I do it because I think all these are our children,” she says. “My own children come here as well—I have nine, and it’s not safe for them to sleep at home.”

But the trek poses its own risks. Girls on their way to the center have been raped, Christine says. “There is another big problem. Some of the older girls walk to town and find someone to sleep with, for money,” she explains. “And that’s going to lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS.”

Sometimes the children play games at the center, but not tonight, not in the dark, with the lightning-lit rain clouds looming. Instead they quickly fetch water in plastic basins and use the concrete-walled washrooms recently installed by World Vision.

The excited chatter will stop when the downpour comes, says Juliet. “When it rains, the children really suffer,” she says. “They stay standing all night long because the water comes in the sides of the tents.”

HAUNTED BY THE PAST

In a World Vision compound on the other side of town, there are more than a hundred children who know too well why the night commuters choose these desperate arrangements. They are boys and girls who have spent anywhere from a few months to more than a decade as prisoners of LRA, led by commander and self-proclaimed prophet Joseph Kony from his base in southern Sudan.


In the 19 years the LRA has been fighting against the Ugandan army, many children have died horrible deaths in the vast savannah that stretches unbroken from northern Uganda into southern Sudan. An unknown number—hundreds, probably thousands—are still living as laborers, fighters, and slaves for merciless rebel commanders.

After being forced to take part in horrible crimes against their own communities, many children escape or get captured by the Ugandan military and then are entrusted to World Vision for rehabilitation. Another center cares for young girls who were raped and impregnated by rebel commanders, while a third handles male adult returnees.



Above: Sleepless nights are nothing next to the horrors of rebel abduction. Captivity leaves lasting physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds.





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n 10 years of operation, we have helped reintegrate nearly 100 children with the community," says Michael Oruni, manager for World Vision's rehabilitation center. The rebels tell the children they will be killed by the Ugandan army or by World Vision should they escape. So the effort to help the new arrivals understand they are safe begins the moment they turn up at the center. A bell tolls, bringing forth the children from the center. They gather at the assembly hall, singing in the Acholi language, *Cwinywa yom, ayoma*—"We are so happy to receive our friends." When they see their friends singing, they say to themselves, *I, this one has not yet died*," Michael says. The children are assessed by a full-time nurse. Some have serious injuries and will need time in the hospital. All are malnourished and suffering from scabies, worms, and damaged feet. Most are scarred from past beatings and battles. The children arrive with nothing. The staff give them clothing, a mattress, bed clothes, washing kits—everything they need to be comfortable. The idea they will be poisoned [at the center] stays in their



Above: Prayer and counseling are integral to children's recovery. **Left:** The inscription on the center's wall assures, "God says, 'I am with you always.'"



Above and facing page: Drawings provide a peek into the children's memories, while positive activities like music and games return normalcy to the children's lives. **Right:** Stephen's* family joyfully welcomes him home.

minds for a time, and they may be reluctant to taste food at first," says Michael. "We encourage them, eat with them, and serve from the same plate."

Children are also hesitant to give up their bush clothes. "We tell them they need to separate themselves from the old life. These are clothes they may have removed from the body of someone they've killed, or taken from a rape victim—it holds them back to the past," Michael explains. Eventually, the clothes are burned in an informal ceremony.

Helping children to the point when they can go home safely can take at least a month. The process begins with a personal interview with a counselor. Then the child is placed in a small group with similar histories. Children grieve what they have lost, pass through denial and anger, and find themselves withdrawing into states of depression.

Children may not want to talk at first. Counselors have become adept at using drama, dance, song, Bible stories, and art. "On arrival, the child will draw what is most painful—the





abduction, fighting, killing a relative,” Michael explains. “After two or three weeks, if that child is recovering, most likely he will draw a staff member he likes, a motorcycle, or whatever he likes about the current life. Later the child will draw pictures of the things he liked about home. You see a progression.”

HOMECOMING

Stephen*, 16, is eager to get back to his village, Koro, after more than six months since the rebels abducted him and his brother, Oliver*, in the dead of night.

“The rebels took us and gave us beans to carry, a very heavy load. We had to walk nearly 10 miles that first night,” he says. “They beat me a lot in those days. Anything wrong we did, anytime we got tired, they beat us. There was never a single happy moment during my time in the bush.”

Like all survivors, Stephen had to pretend willingness to join his LRA abductors. An initiation ceremony in which he was nearly beaten to death with the flat sides of machetes was followed by anointment with oil from a local nut. He was given a gun and forced to participate in attacks on villages.

Stephen’s unwanted career came to an end when a Ugandan army unit ambushed his raiding party as they prepared an attack not far from his home village. From the army barracks he was taken to the World Vision center. (Oliver, who had also



been freed, returned home several weeks before Stephen.)

Now preparing to leave, Stephen checks his belongings—the mattress he has slept on, a hoe head, seeds, food, and various items from World Vision that will make his homecoming smoother. He says farewell to friends who are staying behind and climbs into the vehicle.

His parents now live in a camp for displaced people, like hundreds of thousands of others who have been uprooted by the fighting. Koro camp is a maze of round mud huts with overhanging thatched roofs. There is hardly room to move, yet scores of children quickly appear, congregating around Stephen.

His 5-year-old sister, Lily*, wide-eyed, grabs his hand as soon as she sees him. She doesn't want to let him go again. Stephen likes the contact; he holds her hand, touches the head of his baby sister, and shakes hands with his ecstatic parents.

His father, Kenneth*, smiles, remembering the day they learned Stephen was free. "Our happiness was so great, the people around

here came out to share it, we were thanking God so loudly."

Stephen hopes that he can return to high school in Gu. "People will receive me well there, I think," he says. He admits that school fees might be a problem. Kenneth cannot farm distant land, so he tries to earn money by working in other people's fields.

But no one wants to dwell on negatives right now. "There is nothing worse that could happen to a parent than to lose your sons and fear them dead in this way," Kenneth says. "We only thank God, and World Vision, for their successful return to us. We are all here now. We are together." ■

Nigel Marsh is a World Vision journalist based in Nairobi, Kenya.

**Names changed to protect identity*

In spite of war, kidnapping, and dislocation marking their entire lives, young people in northern Uganda strive to maintain the small joys of everyday life.





WE BEGGED FOR OUR LIVES'

Catherine*, 14, was abducted from her grandmother's house in February. After eight weeks with the LRA, she was freed by Ugandan forces and placed in World Vision's rehabilitation center.

As we traveled, they were always asking us, do we want to go back home? Those who answered "yes" were beaten with machetes on the back. One boy said he wanted to stay in the bush. They liked that. The other girls continued to say we wanted to go back, so they punished our feet with stones. We couldn't walk well. They said they would pierce our feet with spears. We pleaded not to be punished—beggd for our lives. We said we would crawl on our hands to get home if they put spears in our feet. They got angry. That's why my three friends were killed. After some days I was initiated into their system by being marked on the forehead with oil. Then I was given to a man as his "wife"—[later I found out] he was called Commander Tulu. He was calm, but his escorts were harsh. There was an older woman who used to torture me. She is in the hospital now with her leg broken by bullet wounds. I have forgiven her—everyone was forced to get into that kind of treatment in the bush. When the [Uganda Peoples Defense Force] came and attacked our camp. Tulu ordered us to run away. We went about a mile away and camped. I fetched water, but as I went back, Tulu came running toward me—the UPDF had followed us. I could not run because my feet were swollen. I knelt down and held up my

hands in surrender. I was taken to the World Vision center, where they said I was very malnourished. They nursed me and gave me good food. Now I'm very healthy. I want to go back to school at Christ the King Primary. I want to be a doctor. But now I will have to walk into town to the mission to sleep at night with all the other children. If the rebels come back and find me, I will be killed immediately. I hope to put into practice what I learned at the rehabilitation center. I loved that people are taught to respect each other, to forgive one another. Many of us have met with those we helped to abduct, and we lived together in the center. We have made peace with each other. ■

Upon Catherine's* homecoming, her grandmother says, "We can't have a party to celebrate [her] return, because other girls have died. This is a place of sadness."

**Name changed to protect identity.*

YOU CAN HELP

- > Pray for the crisis in Northern Uganda. See the insert between pages 4 and 5.
- > Express your concern to President George W. Bush. See the insert between pages 28 and 29.
- > Learn more by visiting www.seekjustice.org.



DREAMING AND DYING ON MEXICO'S STREETS

MONSERRAT IS DREAMING. Her mother is no longer a drug addict. Her brothers and sisters are healthy and strong. “We are doing fine,” she says. “We are living in a house.” It is a sweet dream.

“Then I see it’s not true,” she says. “It’s only a dream. Around me are the same things—street things. Everything is the same, and I feel sad.”

Monserrat Castro Garcia, 13, wakes up most days on a slab of concrete in a park. Everything is indeed the same—the empty swings and graffiti-covered benches; the soiled clothes she wore the day before. Monserrat is a street child in Mexico City—one of 140,000 in Mexico and 40 million in Latin America. Most have faced a troubled life at home.

“My mother would send us to get money for her drugs,” says Monserrat. “We would beg and clean windshields. Sometimes she sent us out to rob people.”

Monserrat was abandoned on the streets after her mother was sent to prison. She was 9 years old. “At first I lived in a square. When I was 10, I met these kids. We fight, but they take care of me.”

A dog named *Manchas*—Spanish for “spots”—provides further protection. He barks at strangers but lets the children hug him and bury their faces in his thick fur.

The children need a watchdog. According to Paco Peña, World Vision’s director for street children programs, theirs is a dangerous life. They are subject to abuse, beatings, and rape. “They will go to jail, or they will die,” he says. “Children can’t survive for more than 10 years on the streets.”

When it’s too wet or cold to sleep in the park, Monserrat sleeps in the sewers. It’s estimated

Left: Monserrat, asleep in a park, has high hopes. “I would like to work to become a doctor, get married, have children, and have a good life,” she says.
Right: Monserrat with her dog, Manchas.



15,000 children live this way in Mexico City, but Paco says there may be three times more. The chronic poverty that affects half of Mexico's population is partly to blame, as is the culture. "In this city of 20 million, 2.5 million children live with chronic domestic violence," Paco says.

Street life is no less brutal. "People call us bums. They call us insulting names. They call us thieves," says street child Ulises Guzman, 14. "They say they don't like the way we smell."

What can be done? World Vision's rescue and recovery center, *Niños de la Calle*, is a safe place for street children and those at risk. Several floors of the shelter serve as a transitional home for former street children and those from violent homes. It's a busy, happy place—each floor complete with bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, and space for children to make crafts, watch television, and dance.

Those still living on the street also have a space at the center known as The Patio. For a few hours each week they can go there to play games, get hot food, showers, and medical treatment.

At The Patio, laughter replaces street sounds as the boys play soccer with the staff. Meanwhile, Monserrat's brother Jesus washes his sister's hair, working in a lice-killing shampoo. She complains she had to have her hair cut short when it became infested with lice. "I cried," she says. "I liked how I had it. It was long, to my shoulders."

She begins to squish lice crawling from her shirt before she washes it. "How many have you found?" asks Ulises, squatting to help her.

Ulises' brother, Aaron, died on the street two years ago. "I miss him," says Monserrat softly. Aaron was her boyfriend. Jesus, who saw Aaron die, cautions Monserrat: "He didn't eat, and he took too much Activo—just like you." Activo, a paint thinner, makes a cheap inhalant.

Center staff encourage Monserrat to reform her lifestyle. She

Below: Monserrat's brother Jesus knows firsthand that street life can kill. Bottom of page: World Vision street counselor Mirna Montalvo spends time with Monserrat.





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holds back. "They understand me here. They tell me not to take drugs. They tell the street wins me," she says.

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15,000 children live this way in Mexico City, but Paco says there may be three times more. The chronic poverty that affects half of Mexico's population is partly to blame, as is the culture. "In this city of 20 million, 2.5 million children live with chronic domestic violence," Paco says.

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Alejandro, 12, badly burned his mouth while working as a fire-breather in the street. Today he lives at World Vision's street children's center. Above: Children get help with homework at the center.

listens, but part of her holds back. "They understand me here. I think they love me. They tell me not to take drugs. They tell me I can move in, but the street wins me," she says.

TRIAL BY FIRE

Paco Peña acknowledges that World Vision is more successful at preventing at-risk children from reaching the street than rescuing those who are already there. Even so, there are remarkable success stories.

Take Eliseo Lopez. Today Eliseo, 29, is a family man making a living as a carpenter. But he understands Monserrat's world perfectly. At the age of 10, he too escaped a dysfunctional family for life on the streets. "I liked doing drugs—Activo, marijuana, and cocaine," he recalls. "It made me forget about everything."

For three years he lived this way, sleeping in sewers or near a bus terminal. "It came down to robbing, beating, fighting, sex, drugs, and abuse by the police," he says. "If we weren't using drugs or getting beaten, it didn't seem like a normal day."

Then "normal" changed. A group of Eliseo's friends lived in an abandoned mechanics shop—the floor saturated with old



but highly flammable oil. One day a street child walked in and tossed a lit candle on the floor. Nearly a dozen children died in the resulting inferno. Eliseo says that after that, he didn't want to be on the streets anymore.

Fortunately, he was having regular contact with World Vision street counselor Elizabeth Vasquez. She assured him he would be welcome at the center. "After living in a sewer—now I had a home," he says.

Eliseo admits it was a struggle to stay off drugs, but center staff were a constant encouragement. "The happiest days of my life were when I lived with World Vision," he says. "Now it's work, work, work, but I have a family, I go to church. I am concerned about and responsible for others. I have a lot to live for."

SEARCH FOR SALVATION

Meanwhile, back in the park where Monserrat lives, the day is ending. Monserrat is having trouble standing. She staggers around the park, holding a piece of cloth tightly to her nose. The cloth reeks with Activo. Another of her brothers, Luis Enrique, wears the goofy smile of a teenager on a bender.

Sometimes Monserrat worries about her friend Marisol. "She was very thin and she didn't like to eat. She was shaking very bad and drooling," Monserrat says. "It scares me. I don't want to end like her."

Street counselors Gustavo Peñaloza and Mirna Montalvo there to calm her fears. Through them, Monserrat knows that God cares for her. "They tell me that he feels bad that we the way we do," she says.

Gustavo and Mirna know the street children's relations with God is key to their survival. "Little by little we tell them that God loves them," says Gustavo.

"There's hope for Monserrat," says Gustavo. "There's always hope as long as there is life."

He sits back on a bench in the park. This is his job: listening, counseling, loving, and praying for these children—trying to help them turn from the nightmare of street life to a future that knows is just a dream away. ■

Former street child Eliseo is now a successful carpenter

World Vision Mexico communicator Luis Armenta contributed to this story.

N OUNCE OF PREVENTION

cross town from *Niños de la Calle*, World Vision's Matlapa center helps ensure at-risk children never reach the street. "In the street, our impact is 35 percent at most," says Paco Peña, World Vision's director of street children's programs. "In prevention, we are successful 99 percent of the time." Jessica Alanis, 11, and her sisters Jasmine, 9, and Monica, 8, typify children at Matlapa.

These were kids who were right on the edge of falling through the cracks," says caseworker Susana Ortiz, noting that the family lived in a cockroach-infested room with an alcoholic mother who worked as a waitress and a prostitute. The children would spend much of their time on the street, vulnerable to sexual predators. These three little girls were like a delicious dish for any guy," says Susana.

They came to the attention of staff at Matlapa when Jessica's mother Veronica, 31, turned up at the center 18 months ago in despair.

Jessica Alanis gets help with schoolwork at Matlapa.

Jasmine had a hearing defect. When she was 1 year old, Veronica's husband went

to the United States to buy hearing devices for her. He never came back. Veronica was left with three children and no support. "I didn't want to think about life. I just wanted to drink. I was always escaping," she says. "I used to scream at [the children] a lot. I blamed them for how we were living."

Staff helped Veronica with night classes and counseling. "I just loved her," says Susana. "I told her she had beautiful things inside." Gradually those beautiful things emerged. "She stopped drinking. She started looking for a more dignified job. Now she doesn't sell her body."

Meanwhile, Jessica and her sisters began to attend the center for schooling, help with homework, and hot meals. Several hundred children pass through Matlapa's gates each year—with such success that UNICEF may use it as a model for programs across Mexico.

Veronica, who now works delivering groceries by bicycle, considers the Matlapa staff angels. "The Lord sent them to protect us. They don't act like people of the world." ■



Picture Perfect

A former sponsored child in Thailand sees God's architecture in his life.

by Somluck Khamsaen



COURTESY NIKORN DUANGSONG

Nikorn and his wife, Suwanna, celebrate his graduation from graduate school in 1999.

Nikorn Duangsong's job is to see the big picture. Working for the national planning and development agency of Thailand in his home province of Chiang Mai, he collects population data to analyze how it affects the economy. The 35-year-old father of two is helping to craft strategies that prepare Thai people for the future.

Nikorn's own future looks bright, but it wasn't always so. When he was growing up in a rural community, poverty broke up his family and threatened his chances for education. But thanks to a kind Christian caretaker and a World Vision sponsor, Nikorn's intelligence was allowed to flourish.

"If I get to meet my sponsor, I want to thank him," he says. "I'm very touched by his kindness. Supporting a child's education for [his] future development is very important."

Nikorn was the second of three boys born into a middle-class family. When he was in third grade, his parents' business of selling agricultural products went bust. Forced into heavy debt, Somboon and Sutin Duangsong thought their boys might have better opportunities in the care of others.

A pastor and his family took in Nikorn. Pastor Sukjai Boonma led a church in an area where World Vision had just started a child sponsorship project. Nikorn enrolled, and for five years, an Australian man assisted him with school fees and provided him with books, a uniform, and school supplies. Nikorn understood the value of these gifts. "Even though my sponsor might have had his own burdens, he was still willing to make sacrifices for me," he says.

Meanwhile, Pastor Sukjai offered a different kind of education through his devotion to prayer, worship, and Bible study. Nikorn started going to church, where the congregation was a warm yet eclectic group of people from all walks of life—from professors to garbage collectors. The fellowship along with participation in Christian camps through World Vision, eventually led Nikorn to become a Christian.

After high school, World Vision assisted Nikorn to attend the University of Chiang Mai where he studied geography. While earning his master's degree in architecture at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, he worked at a consultancy company. Nikorn graduated in 1999 with his new wife, Suwanna, by his side.

The couple lived in Bangkok for a year



our voice be heard about
 the crisis in **northern Uganda!** Please
 complete the other side of this card and
send it to the **White House.**

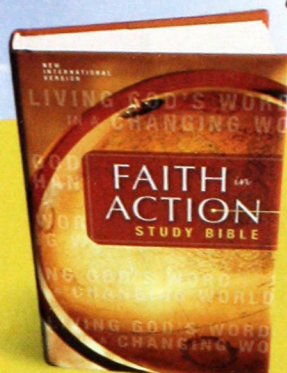
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THE PRESIDENT
 The White House
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
 Washington, D.C. 20500

Treasures from God's Word

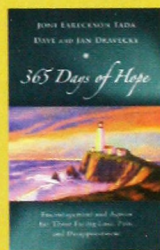
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Where Are They Now?



Picture Perfect

A former sponsor
by Somluck Khamsaen

PUBLIC PRESSURE compels government action. Your effort to speak up about the conflict in northern Uganda (see story on page 12) can make a difference.

Voice your concern to President George W. Bush with the card below. Send a similar message to your congressional representatives by visiting www.seekjustice.org

To find out how to pray for those suffering in northern Uganda, please see the insert between pages 4 and 5.

Dear Mr. President:

I write to express my deep concern about the extreme **humanitarian crisis in northern Uganda.**

For 19 years, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been fighting to overthrow the government of Uganda. LRA rebels based in southern Sudan—who are reportedly being sheltered and armed by some extremists in Sudan's government—capture and use children as frontline soldiers and sex slaves. Fear of abduction causes more than 35,000 children to flee their rural homes each night. The conflict has uprooted 1.4 million people, who live in squalid camps that usually lack food, clean water, and sanitation.

Leadership from the United States can bring peace to this troubled region. **I respectfully ask that you:**

- 1) Urge the government of Sudan to end all LRA activities within its borders.
- 2) Direct high-level political support to bolster the ongoing peace process led by former Ugandan parliamentarian Betty Bigombe and other local leaders.
- 3) Dedicate more humanitarian assistance to help children and families in need in northern Uganda.

Your attention to this urgent matter can drastically improve the lives of those in northern Uganda—especially children.

Sincerely,

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Nikorn and his wife, Suwanna, celebrate his graduation from graduate school in 1999.

Nikorn Duangsong's job national planning and development in the province of Chiang Mai, Thailand, affects the economy. He has developed and implemented various strategies that prepare the country for the future.

Nikorn's own future is bright. He was growing up in a family and threatened his future. A kind Christian caretaker's intelligence was allowed to help him.

"If I get to meet my son, I am very touched by his kind heart and [his] future development."



MICHAEL MILLER

Nikorn continued to work for the consultancy company. But he grew frustrated that his demanding job kept him from spending much time with Suwanna and their little girl, Nicha. He was also concerned about his ailing, diabetic mother in Chiang Mai.

Nikorn prayed to return to his home in Thailand. His opportunity came when he took an exam to work for the National Economic and Social Development Board, a position he'd encountered as a consultant in Bangkok. He passed and took a position in Chiang Mai, which has afforded a better quality of

life for his family ever since.

It's not only at work that Nikorn sees the big picture. "As I look back over my life, it's as if God has chosen me since I was a child," he says. "Every time I prayed to God, he answered." ■

Somluck Khamsaen is a communications officer for World Vision in Thailand.



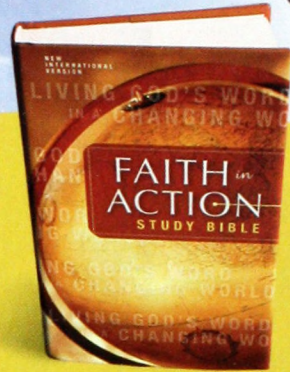
Clockwise from top left: Nikorn with children in front of Sukjai's family (he's the tall man on the left); Nikorn's wedding day;

Suwanna and Nicha, 6, and Daniel, 4; Nikorn at home with his family.

Treasures from God's Word

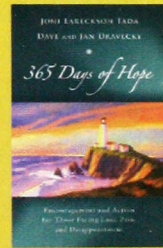
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Overcoming Evil With Good



TOR COSTANZA/WORLD VISION

Margaret Larson visits a child-headed household in Uganda.

The children are snatched from their homes, forced to march into the bush carrying huge loads, trained to fight, and forced to kill. The girls are given as sex slaves to LRA commanders. For these children, there is no education, no health care, no childhood—no hope.

Arriving at World Vision's Children of War Rehabilitation Center in Gulu, I marveled at the dissonance between the beauty of the verdant, fertile countryside and the ugliness of a conflict that deliberately targets children for the worst possible fate—all with little notice and no intervention from the outside world. Since 1995, the center has helped more than 10,000 former child soldiers, the ones fortunate enough to somehow escape. Through artwork, counseling, prayer, music, and peace, the children are guided from depression and fear toward a new life.

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” —Romans 12:21

Inside the camp complex, I saw young girls with babies, the results of their sexual assaults. I saw young boys with scars from bullet wounds, some of them on crutches because of lost limbs. Most of all, I noticed eyes that had seen far too much.

Fourteen-year-old Charles told me about being forced to kill two men with a wooden club; 13-year-old James said he didn't look to see who had been hit by his gunfire. As we spoke, the boys looked down, rubbed their hands together, and generally appeared to carry the weight of the world on their small shoulders.

Outside the center, there is a ghostly sight. Thousands of children walk from their villages to the town of Gulu to sleep in makeshift camps, courtyards, doorways—anyplace that might be safe. These “night commuters” make this harrowing trip every

IF EVER THERE WAS a place where evil walks, it is northern Uganda, possibly the worst place on the planet to be a child.

A bloody civil war has raged there for 19 years, pitting a cult-type military leader, Joseph Kony, against government troops. Kony has populated his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) with child soldiers—children who have been kidnapped from their homes, brutalized, forced to commit atrocities, and threatened with mutilation and death if they try to escape.

night to avoid abduction.

For these children, there is no loving evening with their parents in the comfort of their own homes...just an endless trek to town at night. Their villages have been decimated by the fighting, and more than 1 million people live in squalid camps. Everywhere, the LRA invades and kidnaps children.

After reporting from more than 50 countries, I thought I had seen the worst that human beings can do to one another. I'd witnessed war and met victims of murder and rapes. But I wasn't prepared to bear witness to the deliberate, daily torture of children in a nearly two-decades-long war. The world is apparently willing to ignore it. As a mother, my heart broke so completely that I still can't find words to adequately describe it.

Our very humanity is challenged by what is happening to these children. If we do not stand for them, what do we stand for? If we do not act for them, history will not judge us well. Evil hangs in the hot, thick air of northern Uganda, in part because the global community has allowed it.

I pray—every day—that we will turn away from these children no more. With God's help, we are called to overcome evil with good. Northern Uganda is a very good place to start. ■

Margaret Larson is a 25-year veteran of the broadcast journalism industry, most notably with NBC News. She is now a communications consultant with World Vision.

YOU CAN...

... pray and advocate for children in northern Uganda. See page 21 for details.



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

Reflections

H O N D U R A S

Ana Maricsa, 6, throws caution aside as she delightfully swings as high as she can. Her buoyant spirit reflects the new mood of optimism in Yamaranguila. The community has benefited from a Vision Villages program in which U.S. volunteers help families build bright, new homes to replace old, dilapidated shacks that were a haven for bugs and disease. And, thanks to child sponsors, children get better food, health care, and education—big wins for the indigenous Lenca people who are the poorest in Honduras. No wonder Ana feels like soaring.

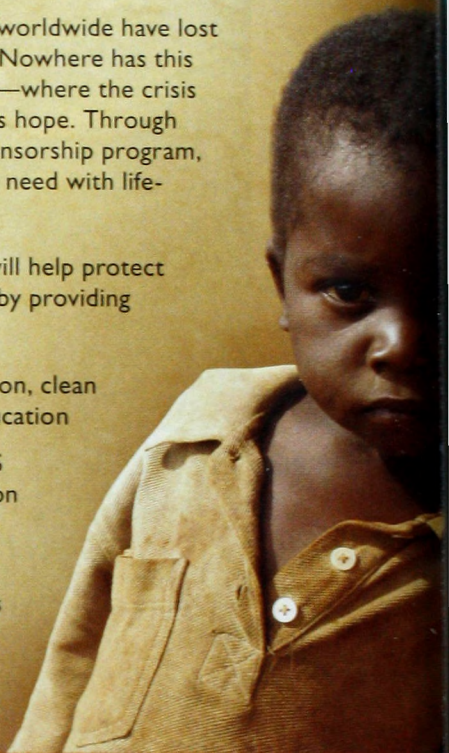
just another statistic?

You can help save a child's life

More than 15 million children worldwide have lost one or both parents to AIDS. Nowhere has this tragedy hit harder than Africa—where the crisis continues to grow. But there is hope. Through World Vision's HopeChild sponsorship program, you can reach out to a child in need with life-saving assistance.

Your gift of \$35 each month will help protect and nurture one hurting child by providing things like:

- Access to improved nutrition, clean water, health care, and education
- Age-appropriate HIV/AIDS prevention training based on biblical values
- Programs to mobilize local churches and organizations to provide additional HIV/AIDS care and prevention services



Sponsor a HopeChild today!

Please send me information and the photo of a child affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis.

I want to sponsor a boy girl either

I've enclosed a check or money order for my first \$35 gift (payable to World Vision).

I authorize World Vision to charge my \$35 monthly sponsorship gift to my credit/debit card:

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Signature (required)

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Other _____ WV Account # _____

First name _____ Last name _____

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World Vision will not rent, sell, or share your personal information with third parties.

Mail this coupon today or call 1.888.852.4453 to start your sponsorship!

Our promise to you: World Vision reviews the monthly sponsorship commitment on an ongoing basis to maintain the quality of its programs and respond to the needs of the families and communities it serves. As a participant in World Vision's Automatic Giving Plan, you will receive 30 days' advance written notice of any future rate changes and will have the option to decline.

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