

# press release

## For immediate release

### *Contact*

David Neveling, Regional Communication Officer, Save the Children Sweden

Phone +254 736 964 807

davidn@ecaf.savethechildren.se

<http://ecaf.savethechildren.se>

## Juba talks: Need for stronger international support and involvement

Nairobi, 20 January, 2007

The future of Uganda's children is under severe threat as negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the Lords Resistance Army edge closer to collapse. If talks fail, children, particularly in the north of the country, will once again live in fear of the physical, emotional and sexual violence that dominated the decades-long conflict in the north.

The emergency situation in northern Uganda is worsening by the day. Increasing ambushes and attacks risk obstructing humanitarian aid trying to reach communities in the Pader district, and this could quickly spread to other areas. Violence has already broken out in several recent attacks in the Juba area of southern Sudan, while the LRA and government forces continue to trade public accusations of attacks and counter-attacks, further poisoning the atmosphere. Any hope of reconciliation is fading fast and needs international support now. The LRA is refusing to continue talks until a new venue is found and the chief mediator replaced. There are also unconfirmed reports of possible LRA rebel movements towards the Uganda-Sudan border.

Until now, the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement has led to increased security, confidence and hope for the future. The improved security has allowed NGOs much better access to camps for people forced from their homes by the fighting. Displaced people have also been able to move to new settlement sites, often closer to their homes and with access to farmland. New fighting and a return to terror tactics in northern Uganda could completely reverse this progress. To prevent this impending catastrophe, Save the Children is urgently calling on all international parties to strongly press the LRA and government forces to adhere to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and negotiate a final and binding settlement to the conflict. Both sides face challenges, but these can be overcome with external assistance and pressure.

The UN, African Union, neighbouring states and the wider international community must speak with a united voice in favour of the resumption of productive peace talks. In particular, the diplomatic community in the capital, Kampala, should stress that any withdrawal from the peace talks is an unacceptable path. We are encouraged by the appointment of the UN Special Envoy to the LRA affected areas, and call on it to liaise with both sides to reach a negotiated settlement.

Save the Children also calls on the Ugandan government to ensure access to education in order to rewrite the future for all children in northern Uganda. Save the Children is working in Uganda and across 19 other countries to provide education in conflict-affected countries, for example rebuilding and refurbishing schools, giving children the security and hope education can provide. This potential for education and reconstruction in Uganda will also be threatened if the security situation breaks down.

**MORE**

Save the Children recommends that:

- The UN, African Union, neighbouring states and the wider international community speak out in a united voice for the resumption of productive peace talks
- The Government of Uganda and LRA must immediately focus on peaceful resolution of the conflict and respect the Cessation of the Hostilities Agreement.
- Both sides immediately cease all military activity, as stipulated in the Cessation of the Hostilities Agreement, in order not to undermine the peace talks and build confidence between the parties and with the communities affected.
- The LRA order all fighters to assemble and immediately release all women and children.

The diplomatic community in Uganda jointly express stronger support for the peace talks and provide technical assistance to the teams to improve negotiating skills.

###

Save the Children Sweden started working in Eastern and Central Africa in 1965. It has offices in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Nairobi, Kenya; and Khartoum, Sudan. Save the Children Sweden has long-term child-rights based development programs in Ethiopia and Sudan, and it supports local partners in Kenya, Eritrea, Somaliland and Uganda.

The organisation focuses on building the capacity of local people, community-based structures and organisations. In Eastern and Central Africa, it works with more than forty different non-governmental organisations and government bodies. In addition, it has adopted a direct implementation approach in southern Sudan and the refugee camps of western Ethiopia. All of the work in the region focuses on children's rights, and tackles issues that affect marginalised children. The core of the work focuses on children affected by conflict, discrimination, abuse, exploitation, and HIV/AIDS. Save the Children Sweden's focus also includes education, child participation and good governance in the best interest of the child.

Save the Children Sweden is a non-governmental organisation. It is an active member of the International Save the Children Alliance – a global movement for children's rights. Through 18 offices around the world, the organisation contributes ideas, experience and funds to 500 projects in more than 60 countries.

Save the Children fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide. Save the Children works for a world:

- which respects and values each child.
- where all children participate and have influence.
- where all children have hope and opportunity.

#### Eastern and Central Africa Region

Regional/Kenya office  
Box 19423  
202 KNH – Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel +254 20 386 5888/90  
Fax +254 20 386 5889

Ethiopia office  
Box 3457  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Tel +251 11 321 0960  
Fax +251 11 321 4234

Northern Sudan office  
Box 6134  
Khartoum, Sudan  
Tel +249 183 256 415/16  
Fax +249 183 241 589

Southern Sudan office  
Box 19423  
202 KNH – Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel +254 20 386 5888/90  
Fax +254 20 386 5889

info@ecaf.savethechildren.se



**Save the Children**  
Sweden