

AEP Scholarship Program Grows Into Uganda

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Africa Education Project announced that the Annie L. Jeter Scholarship Program will expand into Uganda in 2005. Uganda, located in eastern Africa just west of Kenya, is well known for its warm hospitality, mountain gorillas, and Lake Victoria ports. But it is also a country ravaged by an AIDS epidemic and civil war. The AEP Uganda Program will focus on young people affected by the AIDS epidemic and the civil war.



Uganda was one of the first countries in Africa to be hit by the AIDS epidemic, or Slim as the disease is known locally. In the late 1980's the Ugandan government launched a massive public-education campaign that managed to significantly slow the rate of infection from a national average of 14% in the late 1980's to 5% percent in 2001, a reduction unprecedented in Africa.

But among a population of about 26 million, there are still hundreds of thousands of

Uganda Quick Facts

Population: 26 million (2002)

Capital: Kampala

Independence: 9 October 1962 (from UK)

Languages: Over 56 dialects spoken

Official National Language: English

Life Expectancy: 46 years

Total Area: 236, 040 (slightly smaller than Oregon)

Ugandans already infected and dying from the virus each year leaving many orphaned children behind. The encouraging news is that the majority of HIV orphans are not HIV-positive. Many of the older orphans were born before their mothers became infected.

Northern Uganda has suffered from civil unrest since the early 1980s. Hundreds of people have been killed in the rebellion against the Ugandan government lead by two main rebel groups, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). An estimated 400,000 people have been left homeless. Thousands of children also have been victims of the civil war: some have lost their families and others have been abducted by rebel fighters to serve as fighters or porters.

In the US, orphaned children like these might end up in foster care or be put up for adoption. But as with most African countries, adoption in Uganda is rare. In the past, there has been little need to find homes for children who had lost their parents. There was always family to take them in. The problem is, with a million children who've lost parents to AIDS or war in Uganda, the country's social and political systems are overwhelmed like many other African nations facing war and disease. Africa Education Project hopes to assist young people affected by disease and war by offering them educational opportunities to deny their circumstances in pursuit of a bright future.