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Livelihood Programs Help Heal War Wounds in Uganda

Richmond, Va. – October 1, 2008 - Until Christian Children's Fund came into her life, 25-year-old Santa Atalla was a war-wrecked woman in northern Uganda.

She was born and raised in Lira; her life and the lives of those around her were full of fear caused by Lord's Resistance Army rebels and their atrocities.

One day in 2004, her life took a major turn for the worse. Atalla had to leave her community and walk nearly 20 miles to an Internally Displaced People's Camp. The relocation was on government orders and was the safest way to remain alive. The Lord's Resistance Army rebels were at the height of their rebellion, killing and maiming civilians, and abducting children.

Thousands of other families also abandoned their homes and went to IDPCs that were safer and under government surveillance.

Atalla, her husband Mark Ango and their then 4-year-old son Solomon Alal were in the camp for a year.

"We lost everything," Atalla said. "We lost our chickens, goats and food. We also lost our house because the mites (bugs) collapsed it when we were in the camp."

"Life was difficult," Ango said.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), there are still 944,000 displaced residents as of June 2008. The IDMC reports that there are more than 870,000 returnees like Atalla's family in their villages of origin, many of whom have ongoing protection and assistance needs.

Christian Children's Fund stepped in to help returnees return to a normal life by implementing a comprehensive livelihood community-based program. Through this program, in partnership with the United Nations Development Program, 3,000 displaced residents have improved their living conditions.

"CCF has given us money. They have taught us entrepreneur skills, book keeping," Atalla said.

CCF organized the returnees into small manageable groups and trained them in various business skills. Upon completion of the training in June 2008, Atalla's group of seven received \$260, which is 416,000 Uganda shillings, to be used toward starting a business.

Atalla chose to sell farm produce. She buys items such as beans and grains from local farmers and resells them at a higher price at a market near her Lira home.

Atalla said she earns about \$10 (17,000 Uganda shillings) a week, far higher than the disposable income of 28 cents a week that families had been living on before the CCF livelihood program.

In addition to Solomon, Atalla and Ango have two other young children – Jennipher Anume, 6, and Teddy Adong, 1. They also have a niece they are helping raise.

Atalla is hopeful that her business will continue to grow.

“In the future, I want to buy cows and goats,” she said. “Sincerely, this CCF program has made my family’s life easy on a daily basis.”

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Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is a global force for children, helping the world's poorest and most vulnerable survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. Serving children since 1938, CCF works in 31 countries and assists approximately 15.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin.



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