

## **Uganda: Women run projects to heal and bring hope**

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Over 600,000 women in conflict-torn Northern Uganda have lived with the traumas associated with war for nineteen years. The overcrowded camps have been home to the population for just as long. For women and girls in this region riddled with conflict, violence has become part of every day life.

The Lord's Resistance Army, which is fighting against the government of Uganda, attacks and abducts women and girls. In Aboke, sixty girls, some as young as twelve, were kidnapped from their school. They were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. Often the only refuge from the rebels is in the overcrowded camps, which are not secure themselves and have further exposed women and girls to violence and abuse. Many women are forced to offer sexual services to the very men who have raped them, in order to gain protection for their daughters.

In spite of their horrifying experiences, women have somehow managed to respond with a depth of compassion and creativity that is breathtaking. With little or no resources to rely on, they are initiating and running a variety of schemes and projects designed to heal and give hope to those affected by the war as a way of making a contribution to their community and to a future free from the pain that has shattered their own lives.

*This article was written by an outside contributor and does not necessarily reflect Amnesty International policy.*

In May and June this year, journalists Euan Denholm and Richard Lough travelled to Northern Uganda. There they found a population physically scarred and emotionally traumatised. Richard Lough reports on how many women transformed their own suffering into the driving force behind their search for peace. Listen to the radio piece on **news.amnesty** - <http://news.amnesty.org/index/ENGAFR590022005>