



# NIGHT COMMUTING, HIV/AIDS AND HEALTH ISSUES

## **NIGHT COMMUTING**

- **When the sun sets, people start to worry. As children get abducted from camps and people get burnt in their grass huts (houses).**
- **They have to walk daily for miles to the town centre for overnight safety.**
- **People sleep wherever they can find a space –corridors, open ground etc.**
- **In the morning, people walk back to camps as they are not allowed to stay in town areas during day time.**
- **Whenever possible children then walk to schools, then back to camps and at sunset walk back into the town centre.**
- **We were taken to witness the arrival of the “commuters” into Kitgum town. There were thousands of them.**

## NIGHT COMMUTING

- **Walking in to town centre at sunset.**



# **NIGHT COMMUTING**

**Children sleeping on the corridors.**



## **NIGHT COMMUTING**

**Children sleeping in open ground.**



## NIGHT COMMUTING



- The very young sleep in close proximity to each other to get some warmth.
- This condition is a veritable haven for infectious or contagious diseases.
- With no medication they invariably die.

## NIGHT COMMUTING



**At daybreak they troop back again since LRA never attack the bigger towns. Returning to their camps in the morning and repeating the journey every night of the year.**

**The conditions are worse during rainy seasons, with no sanitation many catch diseases and inevitably die.**

## NIGHT COMMUTING AND HIV/AIDS

- *We could not help wondering what went through the minds of small children who are forced to be “commuters”. Some walk for up to 10km each morning back to the camps, walk to school, walk back to camps and then “commute” in the evening to town centre – a daily tally of as much as 40km (25 miles).*
- While on their way to town centre Apart from the reported rape cases of some “commuters” by Ugandan soldiers, young girls still remain more vulnerable in the dark open spaces and are more readily tempted to have sex for money; as sex has become a commodity in the war-affected areas, with soldiers who have been moving from place of war to the next being the main buyers.
- While in the town centre at night, the lovemaking between adolescent "commuters" in the dark open spaces as some young girls would seek protection from young men while sleeping in the open air are all factors in spreading other sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and HIV/AIDS.
- This has increased chances of spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs, but there is no studies to indicate the true level of HIV/AIDS victims.

## **NIGHT COMMUTING AND HIV/AIDS**

- **The complex, dynamic and tragic situation in Northern Uganda requires a new approach to help address the underlying root causes and factors of the existing poverty, imbalances and lack of ability among the affected people to do things by themselves etc. Population movement and displacement continue to fuel the spread of the HIV/AIDS scourge. Although the HIV/AIDS infection rates from the major Sentinel Surveillance sites in Uganda continue to show declining trends, some places, particularly Lacor Hospital in Gulu, continue to record relatively higher rates. Further data from the districts shows a remarkably large number of adults living with HIV/AIDS in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader.**
- **The levels of education and efforts to communicate the risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and ways of reducing such risks are rendered null and void in those areas. The declining trends in HIV/AIDS infection rates in most parts of Uganda are largely associated with increased awareness in the use of condoms and reduction in the practice of re-marrying widows and widowers. More than 80% of men and over 70% of women in other regions apart from the North have knowledge of two or more important ways to avoid HIV/AIDS.**
- **It is the North that remains most disadvantaged: about a quarter of women in this region have not heard of HIV/AIDS and /or do not even know of any important ways to avoid it. They have limited knowledge of condom use, which might explain the rise in the epidemic in the region. While national averages show that over 55% of women know a source for male condoms, the number is dismal in Northern Uganda.**
- **In 2000/2001, only 20.3% of women in Northern Uganda as a whole knew a source for male condoms. It is accepted that the level of knowledge increases with the level of education and living in urban or stable areas. This should not be the case; people in Northern Uganda have the basic human right to have this information**
- **Nevertheless, the preliminary results from the year 2000 census indicate that the average population growth rate for the North stands at 4.6% per annum (most of who could be HIV/AIDS victims), far above the 2.7% (Central), 3.5 % (Eastern) and 2.9% per annum in the Western region. Unless the people are trained in birth control, such high growth rates are potentially damaging to the development process and are a catalyst for increased household poverty etc. For more data please click [here](#)**



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