



NATIONAL WAR VICTIMS' CONFERENCE

CONCEPT NOTE

From Victims to Survivors: the Struggle for Reparations, Remedies and Justice

28 - 30 May 2014 - Kampala, Uganda

Background:

Decades of civil war and insurgency have left deep scars in Uganda's history. Northern Uganda, in particular, became infamous for adversities and violence defining its days for over twenty years during which the Lord's Resistance Army carried out its horrific rebellion. The gravity of all these appalling and over three consecutive decades long experiences, as well as the aftermath and the sluggish recovery, are among the many reasons why the root causes of the ever-recurring violence in Uganda need to be studied and addressed. Specific focus needs to be paid to overcoming deeply embedded ethnic distrust, to assessing the effects of the conflict on inter-generational understanding, and to providing a roadmap towards a united and prosperous future.

The Government of Uganda is in the final stages of developing a National Transitional Justice Policy, which is envisaged to become an overarching framework for Uganda's post-conflict transition, comprehensively incorporating the topics of justice, accountability, reparations, reconciliation and enduring peace. The planned mechanisms will only succeed, however, if people will feel ownership over the process and if they will be willing to participate.

Victims Participation in Transitional Justice Processes:

AYINET has been empowering war victims since its establishment in 2005. It has facilitated medical surgeries and psychological counselling, engaged in constructive dialogue with communities, addressing obstacles to recovery such as economic hardship, lack of opportunity, pain, gender-based violence, criminality or alcoholism, it has promoted messages of peace and reconciliation, empowered victims' networks and appealed to State authorities to respect the values of Transitional Justice, in particular victim-centeredness and gender- and age-sensitivity. AYINET continues to carry out all these activities to date.

As the draft National Transitional Justice Policy is about to enter into effect, AYINET wants to seize the opportunity of this crucial moment to organise the National War Victims' Conference in Kampala, Uganda, in May 2014, to provide a platform for dialogue, the aim of which is to ensure that Transitional Justice processes will reflect the interests of the victims and that they will be conducted in a manner that takes into account the victims' needs, promotes their sense of dignity and supports their rehabilitation. The victims need to be actively involved in the process and take ownership of it, as only a bottom-up approach has the potential to achieve national peace, justice and reconciliation.

The Conference will bring together representatives of war victims and survivors from around the country, humanitarian and human rights activists, peace builders, media, donors, the United Nations, and Government representatives. The forum will enable victims to:

- come up with a coordinated and strong voice which will be able to influence policy debates on matters concerning victims' rights and active victims' participation;
- discuss and summarise the most pressing issues facing victims of war, raise awareness and identify potential avenues for the resolution, including with the help of activists, the media and donors; and
- build regional and national victims' networks and develop solidarity and united agency for the protection of their rights.

Prior to the Conference, AYINET is conducting regional outreaches in order to:

1. mobilise and sensitise victims to participate in Transitional Justice processes;
2. build a network of war victims, with the help of other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs);
3. engage with key Government institutions on Transitional Justice processes; and
4. organise and hold preliminary and smaller regional conferences for victims and survivors of war, where the victims will be able to enter into dialogue with State and non-State actors in advance of the Conference in May.

The pre-Conference outreach and mobilisation is being conducted in the Greater North, the Western, the Central and the Eastern regions.

To strengthen the effects of the Conference, AYINET will conduct nation-wide post-Conference awareness programs and victims' exchange programs, continue to empower victims and facilitate their mobilisation and association, and work directly with CSOs, victims of serious crimes, donors and key Government officials in order to clearly set an agenda for victims' input and engagement in Transitional Justice and recovery.

The pre-Conference and post-Conference activities are aimed to amplify the positive effects of the Conference, which will be the central event of AYINET's objective to give a voice to victims of war.

Support:

AYINET has secured technical support for the Conference from the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) and the Uganda High Rights Commission (UHRC).

Donors:

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*Center for Global Health and Peacebuilding
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African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET)

Plot 68/70, Police Road, P. O. Box 981, Lira-Uganda

Office Tel: +256 473660170; Mobile: +256772539879

uganda@africanyouthinitiative.org - www.africanyouthinitiative.org