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## SURVIVOR CORPS AND AP LAUNCH PROGRAM IN BURUNDI, RWANDA AND NORTHERN UGANDA



Washington, DC: With encouragement and support from African civil society and The Advocacy Project, the Washington-based Survivor Corps has launched an ambitious program to help conflict survivors in Central Africa draw strength from each other and rebuild their lives.

The new program, Surviving Conflict in Africa, is driven by conviction that survivors are central to building peace – and that they must be given a voice in the process instead of being treated as an afterthought.

The program will begin in Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, three countries that have been deeply scarred by war. A team from Survivor Corps and The Advocacy Project (AP) met with 20 survivor groups in the region in May and will return to Africa this week to plan workshops and identify campaigns. Future activities will be managed from offices in Kampala, Kigali and Bujumbura.

“These three countries have all suffered from terrible violence, but they are also trying to find ways to move forward,” said Michael Moore, an International Program Officer at Survivor Corps, who is leading the team. “We want to make sure that people who were marginalized in the conflicts are not marginalized in the peace.”

The initiative has been welcomed by human rights advocates and organizations working with survivors in the region. Michael Otim, Director of the NGO Forum in Gulu, Northern Uganda, expressed support during a recent visit to Survivor Corps in Washington. “No one is really helping (survivors),” he said. “The problem seems so big and overwhelming.”

Formerly known as the Landmine Survivors Network, Survivor Corps was a co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for its leadership in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The organization recently expanded its mandate to cover all those affected by war, and has asked the Advocacy Project to help its work in Africa with information support.

The recent mission to Africa met many inspiring individuals, including Ricky Richard, who was abducted from his home in northern Uganda at the age of 14 and forced to serve with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group. Mr. Richard founded Friends of Orphans (FRO), a group that helps rehabilitate former abductees like himself.

Ernestine Mukakaranga from Rwanda saw her brothers beheaded by militia during the country's 1994 genocide. She was then raped repeatedly and thrown into a river. While she remains deeply traumatized by the experience, Ms. Mukakaranga volunteers for a home-based aid program that provides care for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Survivors are also leading the call for justice. In Burundi, where civil war has raged since 1993, the human rights group Ligue Iteka is lobbying for a Truth Commission to identify those responsible for the violence.

These show that recovery from war can be hastened by helping others, which is the key message behind the new program in Africa. Survivor Corps and The Advocacy Project will back up the message with specialized training in human rights advocacy, peer-to-peer support and information.

The program will also support campaigns to protect survivors' rights. In one example, Annelieke van de Wiel, an AP Peace Fellow from Amsterdam Law School, will spend this summer in northern Uganda helping advocates for the disabled to integrate disability rights into reconstruction plans.

The program will share the stories of survivors and their campaigns through a monthly newsletter, the Survivor's Voice, and on a web site.

- Learn more about [Survivor Corps](#).

AdvocacyNet is a service of The Advocacy Project (AP) that is offered to advocates working for human rights and social justice at the community level. AP is based in Washington, DC. Phone +1 202 758 3328. For more information visit our [website](#) or [email us](#).