



# Peacebuilding for Sustainable Development

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2017/18**

Editor: Job ETUM

Design: Steven R. Namanya

Photography: Job ETUM, Godfrey OTITI, AYINET

AYINET Director: Victor OCHEN

African Youth Initiative Network

Lira, Uganda

2019

© All rights reserved.

In case you want to reproduce part of this report or use information supplied in it, kindly credit the source.

For any questions, please contact [uganda@africanyouthinitiative.org](mailto:uganda@africanyouthinitiative.org)

## Contents

Acronyms	ii
Foreword	iii
About AYINET	1
RECOVER	2
Transitional Justice	4
Medical and Psychosocial Rehabilitation	6
Gender Power	13
Youth Leadership Development	16
Success stories	20

## Donors



## Acronyms

ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AYINET	African Youth Initiative Network
CSO	Civil society organisation
GoU	Government of Uganda
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICD	International Crimes Division of the High Court
IDP	Internally displaced persons
ICTJ	International Center for Transitional Justice
JLOS	Justice Law and Order Sector
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NUSAF 3	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund 3
NWVC	National War Victims' Conference
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PRDP	Peace Recovery and Development Programme
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative
TJ	Transitional Justice
UHRC	Uganda Human Rights Commission
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPDF	Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces
UVF	Uganda Victims Foundation
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

## Foreword

Dear Friends,

As we continue to serve humanity, we are happy to share this unique learning journey

This is yet a new milestone in AYINET's journey which began in 2005. Since we started our engagement years ago, we owe all our success to the victims and survivors of violence, whose realities and stories of pain that mostly were transformed into hope and smiles and hope kept us moving forward.

Beyond the simple list of activities undertaken and projects achieved, I hope this report will also deliver an insight into how we believe we can make sustainable positive change in Africa. I would like to thank the development partners who have continue to stand with us in our struggle to making peace and justice a reality for humanity. We have gradually grown to become one of the most actively involved indigenous African initiative, and our motivation is for African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET) to become and international organisation from Africa.

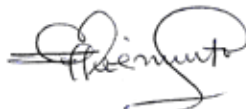
Experience of this an unforgettable moment in the work for many years have taught us that there can be no sustainable development without peace, and there can be no future peace without the engagement of legitimate owners of the future – the young people.



Therefore, we continuously strive to perfect the unique experience in promoting the culture of peace, in youth leadership development, in delivering lifesaving health intervention and above all; our new grand vision of establishing a permanent infrastructure for peacebuilding in Africa, by building the African Peace Academy.

We our continued energizing actions, more humane, more service delivery oriented and more preventative – we are ready to further our mantle and leadership for peace. We remain totally in favour of peace and committed to always chose peace at any time and under any circumstances.

These success stories represent huge steps forward and a milestone towards the recovery of survivors.



Victor **OCHEN**

Founder and Executive Director for  
African Youth Initiative Network (**AYINET**)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mr. Alex Omwa,  
Board Chairperson  
Assistant Inspector of Police



Ms. Sophie Rose Acen  
Vice Chairperson,  
Senior Education Officer, Minis-  
try of Education



Dr. Patrick Andrew Opio Board  
Member  
General Surgeon



Mr. Patrick Ogang,  
Board Member  
Community Opinion Leader –  
Northern Uganda



Ms. Maureen Agena  
Board Member  
Gender Activist & Specialist in  
ICT for Development

## About AYINET

African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET) is a human rights organisation based in Lira District in Northern Uganda, working to promote peace and justice in Africa. Since its foundation in 2005, AYINET has been working toward making peace and justice a reality for victims and survivors of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Over the last 14 years, AYINET has courageously raised the flag for peace and justice amidst the ruins of violent conflicts in greater northern Uganda through upholding the pillars of Transitional Justice that seek to ensure victims' recognition, dignity and reintegration.

AYINET's interventions have been providing healing through intensive reconstructive surgical and psychosocial rehabilitations, promoting opportunities for women's empowerment and recovery, youth leadership development in peace building and promoting reconciliation in historically divided societies.

### Social uplift for war victims

#### *Youth Leadership Development*



*Peacebuilding*



**Transitional  
Justice**



*Psychosocial  
Support*



*Medical  
Rehabilitation*



*Gender  
Inclusion*





## RECOVER

Rehabilitating Communities and Victims for Effective Recovery



**AYINET reached 25,000 people from the Greater North to participate in and increase awareness of key issues around Transitional Justice processes in the country.**

The RECOVER program aims at accelerating revitalization of post conflict community, enabling healing and community's participation in Transitional Justice processes. AYINET's approach to transitional justice exemplifies the core principles and values as defined in Uganda's National Development Plan 2040 and UN Agenda 2030.

In collaboration with Government and development partners, AYINET works to domesticate and demonstrate progress against SDG 16 for Peace and Justice, 03 for ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all and 05 for achieving Gender equality and empowering all women and girls' targets and indicators.

RECOVER seeks to empower young leaders, providing intellectual rigor, equipping youth with skills and engaging them in respectful social, political and development dialogues to influence and redirect the pace of change towards tolerance, peace and recovery.

In addressing conflict, insecurity, injustice and poor governance, through advocacy and community engagement, platforms for meaningful social political commitments are created with kind support from Democratic Governance Facility and USAID-SAFE.

The RECOVER program is implemented in four sub-regions of Acholi, Lango, Teso and West Nile in greater northern Uganda.



## Mobilizing communities survivors of war in greater Northern Uganda

- Engaging Local authorities
- Stakeholder involvement
- Patient Testimonies
- Radio Announcements
- Radio Talk shows
- Community based mobilisers



*Hajji Sebi Longa (RIP) receives a list of war survivors treated from the west Nile region during a stakeholder meeting in Lira, 2018. He was a long community based mobiliser in Moyo with AYINET over the years*



*A strategic meeting interethnic religious and opinion leaders from the greater north region to facilitate and promote harmony and tolerance*



*AYINET Staff at a Radio talkshow at Radio Pacis in Arua district in West Nile region*



*Community outreach in mobilizing war survivors in Lalagi, Omoro district.*



*Medical personnel at St. Joseph's Hospital, Kitgum explain to the stakeholders the issues of the patient sitting on her hospital bed*

## Transitional Justice



AYINET works to increase prospects of positive change through, Transitional Justice which spells out the need and urgency of reconciling, healing and developing together as one nation.

Through service delivery oriented advocacy, AYINET upholds the pillars of Transitional Justice that seek to ensure victims' recognition in truth telling, criminal prosecutions, reparations, law reforms and reconciliation.

### Supporting Commemoration and Memorialization

In solidarity with war victims, AYINET supports commemoration events in order to support the healing and recovery process. It is also a platform to communicate peace and reconciliation messages.

The relatives and families of the deceased are also comforted in the memory of their lost ones.

From 2017 to 2018, AYINET supported memorialization events in Lukodi in Gulu, Atiak in Amuru, Ombaci in Arua, Mukura in Ngora, Kabwele in Kumi, Obalanga in Amuria, Barlonyo in Lira, Latanya in Pader and Omot in Agago.

The painful memories should help us move

forward, we cannot undo what happened in Barlonyo here on the 21st February, 2004 but we should accept to move forward. Rev. Edinga

The communities of Barlonyo benefited from advocacy events during the commemorations; Besides the kaguta bridge, A technical institute was constructed.

AYINET continues to further advocacy for the affected post conflict communities through radio talk shows and IEC materials, outreaches, workshops and meetings through the regions.

As a result, this advocacy has contributed



*Barlonyo Massacre site Monument*

the formulation of the draft Transitional Justice policy which has already gained a certificate of financial implication and is currently with cabinet. This policy will create a roadmap for meaningful recovery, peace and reconciliation.

## Transitional Justice Dialogues



Decades after the war, many unanswered concerns remain among the conflict affected communities in the greater northern region.

To facilitate the recovery process, AYINET organizes Transitional Justice dialogues to provide a platform for people to discuss issues related to the effects and solutions/ways forward to realizing peaceful co-existence.

The reparation of war survivors is a key concern from the

dialogues held. How people would be compensated and what criteria would be used to identify them.

The affected communities expect to get answers about the truth of what transpired during the war. There is a need to understand who the perpetrators were and for justice to be delivered.

The dialogues also provide a platform for the communities to get updates on the proceedings of the perpetrators that are undergoing trial like Dominic Ongwen. It also helps to mobilize victims who sustained injuries during the war still need medical attention.

It further facilitates the engagement of district leaders, groups and networks of war survivors.

Dialogues have been held in Arua municipality, Abok subcounty in Oyam district, Atiak sub county in Amuru.

*"From 1979, I have never had peace in my life, from Amin's war to M7 war to LRA, where he lost his family and siblings"*



## Delivering Justice for war survivors

AYINET is committed to provide access to justice for war survivors who suffered grave humans rights violations as a result of the two decade war in greater northern Uganda.

In collaboration with the ICC, AYINET mobilizes, sensetizes and updates the communities about the ongoing court proceedings of Dominic Ongwen (former LRA army commander) who is currently facing trial at the ICC.





## Medical and Psychosocial Rehabilitation



### Medical Rehabilitation

For decades, the war that ravaged northern Uganda left thousands of survivors with war injuries. In mobilizing and engaging the communities that were both physically and mentally shattered, their priority need was immediate medical intervention.

For the last fourteen years, AYINET continues to provide reconstructive surgery to the physically injured of whom most were severely tortured, sustained bullet wounds, sexually violated, and land-mines survivors.

The survivors were left with medical conditions that include keloids, fistula, contractures, mutilated lips and ears, body swellings, chronic wounds, chronic osteomyelitis, retained bullets and bomb splinters.

With victims scattered across the far ends of the implementation sub-regions, the established community structures that involve Community based mobilizers and counselors, local leaders and project beneficiaries with their testimonies contribute to help AYINET identify, screen and qualify victims to benefit from the medical rehabilitation program.

**1,192**  
medical surgical

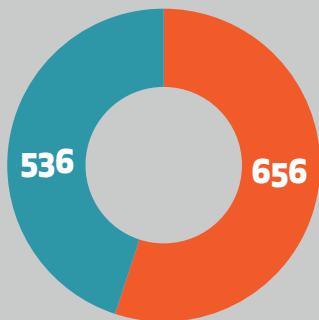
**21,000**  
reconstructive surgery



In the period 2017 – 2018, AYINET treated 1,190 beneficiaries in the medical surgical camp. Since inception, AYINET has provided reconstructive surgery to more than 21,000 victims of torture.



## Medical Rehabilitation



**45%**

1,192 war survivors



## Mental health and Psychosocial Support



The greater northern part of Uganda that experienced over two decades of war suffered various atrocities and gross human rights violations. It was characterized by indiscriminate killings, abductions, child soldiers, mutilations, rape, torture and sexual slavery which resulted into children born in captivity.

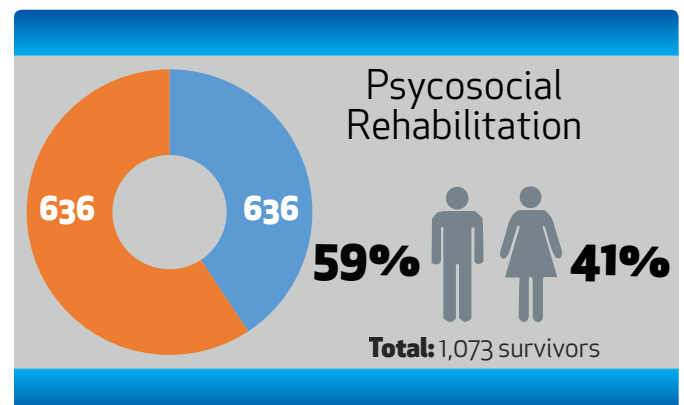
The atrocities suffered brought about widespread trauma in a region where survivors co-exist with former abductees and ex-combatants who are stigmatized and discriminated against. Conflicts arising from land and property ownership are on the rise with concerns of missing persons that were abducted and never returned.

The trauma escalated social vices like sexual and gender based violence, alcoholism, crime, drug abuse and early child marriage causing a degeneration of social economic and cultural values

To protect and promote the psychosocial wellbeing of war survivors, AYINET provides psychosocial care to post

conflict communities of survivors battling with effects of the conflict that threaten their mental health.

From 2017 – 2018, approximately 500,000 war survivors received psychosocial support through client-centered counseling, focus group counseling, family counseling and couple counseling. A key component of the intervention involves art therapy strategies through Sports for healing tournaments, story-telling and Music, dance and drama.



## Sports and Culture fostering reconciliation

In its commitment to bring peace and reconciliation, AYINET organized a series of sports and cultural events such as football, netball tournaments and cultural dance competitions.

During these gatherings, the population was mobilized and sensitized on peace and reconciliation. It was a unique opportunity for the district members of Agago and Pader to come together and start to dialogue to overcome underlying community conflicts and share solutions for the future.

These activities fostered peaceful co existence for the participating communities.

Health experts emphasize the need for physical fitness

and many a times, youth find it necessary to engage in sporting activities to build their muscles, cement relationships with friends and also as co-curricular activities.

AYINET came up with sports and culture as a means of engaging and reducing on the level of redundancy and criminal activities by the youth.

In order to promote cultural unity and diversity, AYINET Youths are always engaged in football, netball, music, dance and drama to promote cultural unity, peace and reconciliation.

This is through unifying the perpetrators and survivors as all are equal and deserve rightful human dignity.



## Reducing ethnic tensions

The long standing feud between the Lango and Acholi community in Omot s/cty in Agago district was finally amicably resolved through engaging the communities in by using Arts and Culture. It involved, football and netball tournaments besides cultural dance competitions. It was a first time for both communities to peacefully engage together due to the long standing wrangles.





## Engaging Community Focal Point Persons



With support from USAID - SAFE, AYINET implemented the “Traumahealing for post conflict peace and reconciliation” program in the two districts of Pader and

Agago in Acholi sub-region.

AYINET identified, trained, and supported 8 Community Focal Point Persons. These were young leaders who had a deep understanding of their immediate communities and the issues affecting them. Their active engagement ensured that survivors in their villages could receive psychosocial support whenever in need.

In order to carry out their duties effectively, these identified focal point persons were trained in counselling, conflict mitigation, leadership and mediation. They were also provided with bicycles and a monthly stipend.

AYINET referred and attached the empowered young leaders to work with their subcounty CDOs and Police to amicably handle problems like child neglect, suicidal tendencies, alcoholism, theft, stigma and discriminations and Sexual and Gender based violence that are rampant in these areas.

### Healing from trauma: direct PTSD from 2017

Opio sam (not real names) was abducted during the war and lived in captivity for 6 years, upon return, his parents were dead, they had lost their land and had nowhere to stay.

he was coerced to beat and bite people to death

during abduction. This bred in him immense guilt and self-blame which drove him into isolation in fear of people.

Through therapeutic intervention involving cultural and local leaders, Acceptance and reintegration was finally possible for Sam who had now been apportioned a piece of land for cultivation having been accepted back into his community.

## Implementing it



Establishing liaison between AYINET, District and Hospital Administrations

Mapping most affected communities with help of CDOs in different subcounties



Identification and transporting of target groups to Hospital

Mobilisation of Community for initial Assessment



Survivors rescreened at Hospital and prepared for Surgery

Patients are given pre operative and post operative counselling and care to survivors



Follow up to monitor their physical and mental wellbeing with support of community mobilisers

Upon improvement, survivors are discharged



## LRA returnees leaving the past behind

The majority of the LRA returnees are now living a happy life after letting go of what people say about their involvement in the LRA insurgency. This is so because

they have learned to accept their experiences and carry on with their lives, amidst stigma and discriminations by members of the community.



*"Whatever people say about me and my children I no longer care. I just laugh it off. Sometimes, I catch my neighbour talking about my past red handed; I make sure I just laugh loudly to make them feel ashamed them."*

**Abalo Christine from Awere Sub-County, Lagile Parish**

“

*When I had that smelly wound I had no friends, felt like an outcast in my own community and couldn't do any garden work. Through surgical intervention from AYINET, I can now do everything without any limitation,"* **says a survivor who had suffered from chronic osteomyelitis for over ten years.**

*"Now that my son has healed, I request that any willing person should help take him back to school, if a youth remains uneducated, they are at high risk of being unemployed, gambling and will later be tempted to gang up and return to the bush and begin fighting again. This is not what we want, history should never be repeated!"* **says a father to a child who had post burn contracture from Amuria District, during follow up of successfully operated patients by AYINET in 2017.**

”

## Gender POWER

Promoting Opportunities for Women Empowerment and Recovery

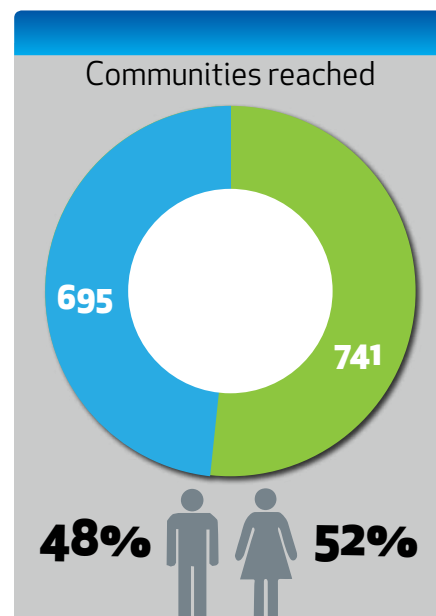


In order to achieve the vision of recovery, reconciliation and resilience, AYINET implements the gender POWER campaign: an initiative to ensure all gender inclusive participation. The campaign is implemented over the greater northern region of Uganda.

The Gender POWER campaign promotes opportunities for women's empowerment and recovery by conducting public dialogues, counseling, radio talk shows and disseminating Information, Education and Communication materials(IEC) in the post-conflict communities.

The public forum dialogues create a platform for advocacy where communities, leaders and civil society organizations discuss challenges around gender inclusion, Gender based violence, land and property ownership, gender equality and equity so as to collectively derive amicable solutions in fostering recovery

In promoting gender inclusion in transitional justice processes, the dialogues contribute to womens' participation in leadership and decision making. More





*The public forum dialogues create a platform for advocacy where communities, leaders and civil society organizations discuss challenges around gender inclusion, Gender based violence, land and property ownership*

women are now involved in crafting solutions for challenges like exclusion of women in decision making regarding mediation, conflict resolution, marriages, divorce and land ownership.

During the dialogues, women are encouraged to get organized in groups to be able to access government programmes like Uganda Women Empowerment Program (UWEP) besides getting involved in increasing their individual household incomes through engaging in income generating activities, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) so as to enhance their livelihoods and support their families.

The campaign strengthens advocacy efforts across the region to create more awareness and engagement of communities in promoting opportunities for women's empowerment and recovery through holding radio programs and dissemination of the IEC materials

The talk shows also provide opportunities for AYINET to respond to queries and concerns from wider areas out of the geographical scope of project implementation. A case in point is in Arua district where callers from South Sudan and DR Congo made contributions.

Basing on the wide coverage of radio programs, more communities are mobilized to participate in AYINET programs at the grassroots level.





Arach Margaret Komakech, the LC 3 Chairperson of Patiku in Gulu addresses participants at a gender public forum held in Gulu.



"Have been getting problems at home because many women come to me reporting about their men beating them sometimes they come even half naked with their panties only, Infact today AYINET has brought something good.."

**Enyango Emmanuel,  
Ararak Kanyanga clan leader  
Kamuda sub county, Soroti district**



A discussion session underway with stakeholders, leaders and communities in Morungantuny subcounty in Amuria district.

## Youth Leadership Development



AYINET is committed to empowering young people to redirect their resourcefulness from trauma, anger and violence towards peacebuilding to foster social, economic and political development.

During the conflict, young people were used as tools for injustice and deprived of opportunities for growth in terms of education, loss of family, property and livelihood.

According to UNICEF, over 66,000 children were abducted and while being held captive as child soldiers, suffered from torture, severe beatings and mutilations.

This created a situation where many young people are disillusioned due to loss of parents, lack of access to resources that include education and health services. The trauma, and painful experiences makes them potential threats to peaceful co existence.

### Youth Engagement







*"I am inspired. With the skills I have now acquired here, I will go back and even mentor the chairman of our group who had previously stepped down."*

**Ateo Scovia, participant from Amuria district**

.....



*"The training was really good, and taught us alot of things on leadership and conflict resolution and disaster management that how I can handle a conflict, and how I can amicably bring it to end without bloodshed witout any grudges."*

**Blake Titus Owiny, Soroti Municipality youth leader**



In countering this volatile condition, AYINET creates a platform to mobilize, engage and empower youths at risk as game changers.

The development of Leadership, conflict-resolution, mediation, crisis-management and entrepreneurial skills among these groups promotes peaceful coexistence and equal opportunities for effective participation in community growth.



## Youth Leadership Trainings

In an endeavor to empower the young people as tools not for injustice but for peacebuilding and reconciliation,

Through local government structures and public engagements like community dialogues, AYINET identifies vibrant and vigorous young people who are trained to become agents for peaceful change.

The leadership training provides skills on leadership, group dynamics, crisis management, conflict resolution and mitigation,

Over the years, AYINET has imparted the leadership skills to more than one thousand youths directly who in turn replicate the same training to other members in their respective groups.

some of them are now political leaders, a case in point is Raymond Odongo, currently district Councillor of Aromo subcounty.

Ogwal Moses is the current Chairman LC 1 of Te-Obwolo village, Boroboro parish, Adekokwok subcounty, Lira district.



**More than 400 youth groups have been formed, trained and strengthened over the greater northern region of Uganda.**

## Mobilizing and forming youth groups

AYINET mobilizes and forms youth groups with the aims of facilitating the re-integration of returnees and promoting peaceful co existence in the communities.

The groups enable the youths to be able to access funding and livelihoods support from not only the Government but also other development agencies.

Engaging and mobilizing youths into groups has led to the growth of a network of young peacebuilders devoted to respond to emerging conflicts within their communities.

More than 400 youth groups have been formed, trained and strengthened over the greater northern region of Uganda.

Over half of these groups have benefitted from government programs like Youth livelihoods, Community Demand driven (CDD), NUSAF, PRDP with others being supported other development partners like Bikes for Life who donated bicycles to different youth groups and National Social Security Fund who gave livestock.

## Community Resilience Fairs



The affected community has been engaged and triggered to raise issues that affect their welfare so as to come up with amicable and desirable solutions.

This has been made possible by demanding and holding the leaders accountable for effective service delivery.

This kind of engagement helps the community and the leaders to re-do the unusual happenings (road works, school development programs, health service delivery, .

The resilience of communities. issues affecting community. limelight to be able to demand from their leaders and also provides a forum where they understand better their roles and responsibilities.

platform for leaders to account to their communities.

AYINET conducted a number of advocacy campaigns to curb the discrimination, especially to those directly affected by the insurgency across the two districts of Agago and Pader.

Community resilient fairs brought the local leaders and their community members to discuss and share their experiences to forge better paths to peace and reconciliation.

CDO Amuru subcounty, confirmed an influx of women accessing the subcounty demanding for the UWEP grants meant to support single mothers after the dialogue was conducted in the subcounty.

## Peace Camp 2017

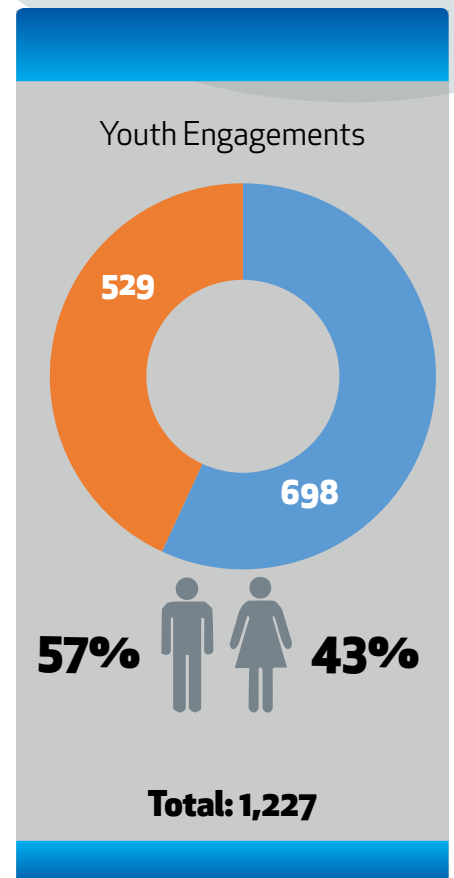


AYINET, with support from the American volunteer organization Peace Corps, held a peace camp at St. Catherine Girls' School located in Boroboro, Lira District. The six day camp brought together 40 school-aged youth from across Northern Uganda.

The youth were identified from different schools with the help of the school administration. Each student was given an application form to fill in and, through a transparent selection process, four students were identified from each school to participate in the Peace Camp 2017.

The objective of the Peace Camp was to engage the youth in the peace-building process in Northern Uganda. AYINET and Peace Corps believe that the youth can be instrumental in the peace-building process in their communities with the right knowledge and training on peace and justice, and conflict mitigation and mediation.

The camp had several activities ranging from classroom sessions that handled issues of transitional justice, the Sustainable Development Goals, gender equity and Equality, life skills and leadership, HIV prevention, and reproductive health, just to mention a few. We also had team building, creativity building, self-esteem boosting, music, dance and drama, sports activities for the students.





## Former abductee survives pain from a sustained bullet



**L**illian (not real names) was only 7 years old when she was abducted by the LRA, in 1998. Her two brothers managed to escape shortly after, which earned her severe beatings.

She was trained as a child soldier, where outrunning the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) soldiers without food, rest and often jumping over dead bodies became routine.

In captivity, Beatrice was a child soldier and caretaker to one of the children of the LRA leader. She engaged in battles, looted property and carried out other brutal assignments.

One day, she was shot in her upper arm while fighting with the UPDF soldiers during an ambush at Atiak town, Gulu district.

Several hours passed before she realized she had been shot, her right hand was paralysed, and blood flowed heavily from the wound. However, nothing was done to the bullet in her arm.

After 7 years, she finally got the opportunity she had been hoping for. At a stand off battle, she managed to run away, walked for three days and finally surrendered to a group of UPDF soldiers on patrol.

Even though her family was ecstatic to see her, the rest of the community did not give her a warm welcome, in the beginning. She was picked on, called names and stigmatised.

The situation became so appalling that the tribe's elders stepped in, warning the community the harassers would face consequences if they continued bothering her.

All the while, the bullet remained in her arm, affecting her day to day activities. At times, the swelling and pain became so debilitating that it would prevent her from working, making it difficult for her to fully support her family.

Her condition also affected her social and family life, as she

felt that she had no one to turn to that would understand. "For long I looked for a way to come out of the situation but failed".

In 2017, a community mobiliser in Odek introduced her to the AYINET, explaining how she could get free medical treatment for her condition.

She later met the AYINET medical team at a community meeting in Odek, where she was assessed and found eligible to be a beneficiary.

Beatrice received surgery at St. Joseph's Hospital in Kitgum. The operation successfully removed the bullet from her arm, releasing her from the tormenting pain.

AYINET's psychosocial team supported Beatrice throughout her recovery. Counselling helped her overcoming the past trauma, adopting a positive outlook and sharing her feelings.

Today, Beatrice is back at home with her family. Relieved from the pain in her arm, she is no longer aggravated by health expenses related to her wound and is now able to contribute to her family's needs and serenity.



***Beatrice at the hospital holding the bullet just removed from her arm.***

## War survivor's resentment turned to hope

**O**GWENG MOSES, who is 53 years old comes from Oakbrook Village, Anara Parish, Aloi Sub County. He initially had sustained a wound from running away for the Karimojong cattle rustlers while he was grazing his cattle when he was still 25 years of age. A twig pierced his leg while he was running for his life. The blister like swelling the grew on his left leg around the ankle was only pierced whenever it grew until it looked healed on the outside but was still painful on the inside.

In 2003, at the height of the LRA rebellion that raged across the greater northern part of Uganda, Ogweng heard the rebels were not far and started running towards Aloi IDP camp. it was after he rested that the scar on his leg started oozing puss. A traditional healer was his nearest medical help who used local herbs. When the swelling failed to show any improvement, his family resorted to saying that he was bewitched.

Ogweng suffered high stigma due to the stench from his leg to the extent that everyone who associated with him started leaving him. He found himself isolated. He didn't mind much only until his wife left him saying that she "could not stay with a man who smells."

Over time, Ogweng cursed why this dilemma happened to him, every time he saw someone laugh or smile toward him, he thought that they were talking about him, or laughing at him in a mean manner.

Even when someone greeted him with a smile, Ogweng perceived that they were laughing at him. "I was always sad and I even contemplated suicide one day but, I was too weak to even commit suicide," this thought remained with him; death was his only hope because he saw no reason to live. The pain was unbearable; he lived with it for fourteen years. Anger and aggression were the only methods of coping. His closest friend was his mother who always stood with him.

In June 2017, Jasper a community mobiliser for AYINET approached Ogweng's mother telling her that they wanted



to help people with the kind of problem he had. Even though he was willing to go to the hospital, none of his relatives was willing to come with him as a caretaker because to them he was was "just going to die," they always called him "lyelakwo" literally mean a living corpse.

Ogweng had to make a grave decision at the hospital. "They (the Doctors) talked to me and told me the only way to save my life is by removing my left leg." Ogweng accepted this operation and stayed in the hospital for three months to recover from this serious operation.

"When I came back home, I looked different in the eyes of every one who thought I would never make it in life. I think because of shame they came and apologized, and I forgave them. I can now do what I never did in the last fourteen years, I even want to get myself a wife and start a new life. The biggest challenge I have now is that I have to learn to walk with one leg and crutches..."

"I was already dead from the inside of me but, they gave me life, my bitterness has turned to laughter with everyone. The resentment towards life has changed to having hope for the life ahead of me."

"When we first initiated our relationship with the Ogweng, he presented symptoms of depression, something he carried with him for over fourteen years, even in our therapeutic relationship he was always angry at everything, at a point he also isolated himself. Today we can testify that his depression symptoms are gradually reducing and he is still under close monitoring with his immediate family. He now has something that he did not have before, hope." Raymond Gobba, Psychotherapist.





## Former child soldier makes peace with himself and family

suffer the consequences. Though the guns have gone silent, trauma, aggression, suicidal tendencies, and stigmatization from communities are daily occurrences for these individuals and their families.

With support from USAID SAFE,

AYINET's Trauma Healing for Post Conflict Peace and Reconciliation Project reaches out to people such as Richard with a focus on addressing issues of post-conflict trauma and the need for psychosocial support, as well as post-conflict reconciliation. Richard was identified and approached by the AYINET counselors who engaged with him and helped him to heal from his traumatic experiences through series of counseling sessions.

During a recent visit to his home, Richard welcomed the counselors with a big smile, sitting relaxed under a huge tree, he narrates his experience, "Before I met the counselors, I had differences with my parents. They would say I have a mental problem, but now they talk to me as their own child and a normal person."

His mother, who used to worry a lot about her son's wellbeing, agrees that the counseling changed their situation positively, "As a mother, I feel that the counseling from AYINET staff has brought peace at home and in Richard."

Since the beginning of the counseling, Richard has demonstrated attempts to reconcile with himself as well as his family and his community. He has returned the documents he once stole, joined a community football team, and enjoys a much better relationship with his parents and siblings.

**R**ichard Odongo is a 24 year old, born and raised in a family of eight in Lalwa B Village in Pajule Sub-County, Pader District. When first looking at Richard, a tall young man, he looks like any other youth from his village; however, his behavior is a little different from that of most of his peers. He is described as anti-social, aggressive, and is not integrated into the community or even his family.

For example, Richard stole his sibling's academic document because he felt belittled by his family for not having received school fees to attend school. When asked about the document's whereabouts on, he hurled insults at his family. As the tension grew, he disappeared from home for two months, leaving his mother helplessly worried.

Richard, however, is not like any other normal troublesome kid; his behavior dates back 16 years when he had an experience that altered his life completely.

"One evening when my parents were out in the gardens, the rebels attacked our village and took me and my uncle away," he narrates. Only eight years old at the time, Richard was taken to the bush and had to spend four years living with the LRA rebels as a child soldier.

Richard is one of the tens of thousands who were abducted by the LRA rebels in northern Uganda and who continue to



## Staff



Victor OCHEN



Joseph AKWENYU



Denis ODWAR



Raymond GGOBA



George EGOPEL



Stephen OKELLO



Diana AKELLO



Anna AONYO



Martin OENEN



Steven NAMANYA



Jacob ALOKA



Isaac OWINY



Richard ONEN



Jimmy WANYANG



Jackson OPIO



Judith AMONGI



Job Etum



Augustin M. OTIM



Susan ADERO



Charity IBIARA



Lydya ASIO OMIAT



Proscovia LAYET



Godfrey OTITI



Nancy LAMUNU



Charles ALLENGO



Peter OKELLO



George ALILA



Charles OKWERA



Francis ENGOL



Jimmy OYURU

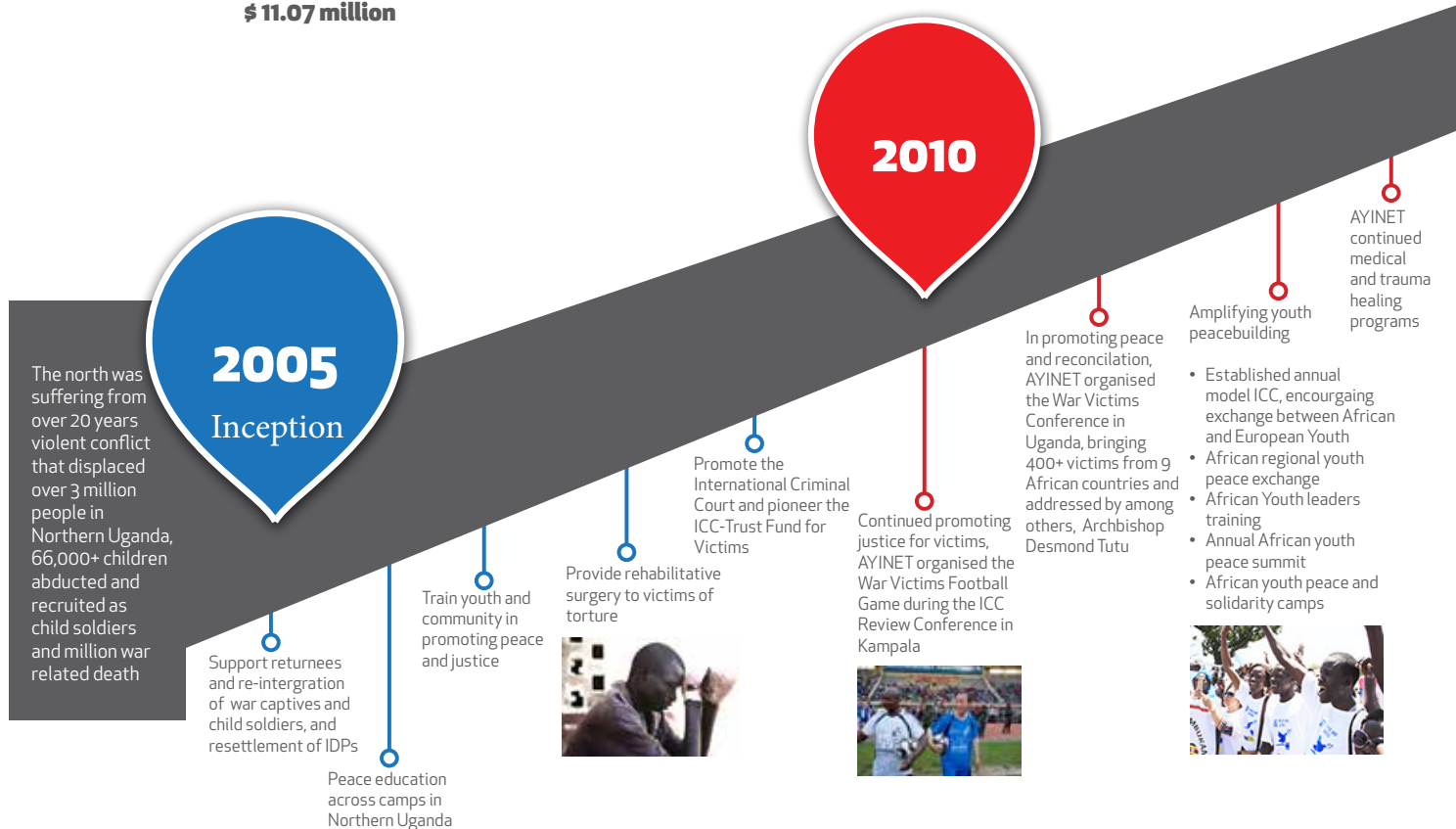


# AYINET GROWTH TIMELINE

## 15 years of social uplift through;

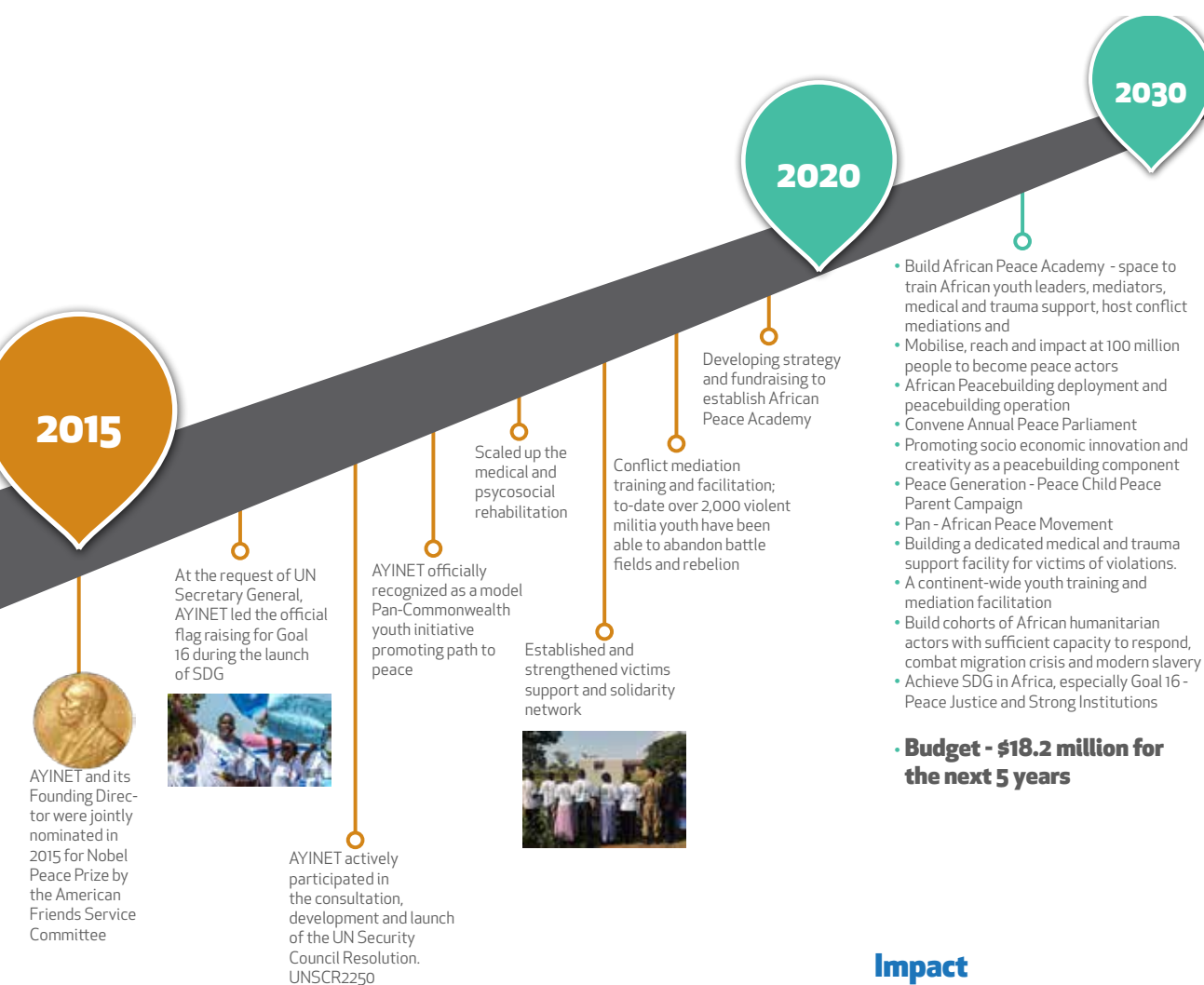
- Peacebuilding
- Youth Leadership dev't
- Medical & Psychosocial support
- Gender Mainstreaming

**\$ 11.07 million**



## Donors





## Impact

Over 10 million people in Uganda and across Africa reached and positive impacted by AYINET's 15 years of Peacebuilding

.....

22,000 + received Reconstructive surgical surgery and  
100,000+ received trauma healing

.....

50,000+ youth trained as peacebuilding and are actively  
leading over 500 youth organisations in Sub-sharan Africa



Center for Global Health and Peacebuilding  
A Center of The Underwood Foundation



Fonds au Profit des Victimes  
The Trust Fund for Victims



African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET)  
Plot 25, Church Road,  
P.O. Box 981, Lira-Uganda. Office  
Tel: +256 772539879  
uganda@africanyouthinitiative.org

[www.africanyouthinitiative.org](http://www.africanyouthinitiative.org)



African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET)  
P.O.Box 981, Lira (Uganda)  
Plot 25 Church Road, Adyel Division  
Email: [uganda@africanyouthinitiative.org](mailto:uganda@africanyouthinitiative.org)  
Tel: +256 772539879

[www.africanyouthinitiative.org](http://www.africanyouthinitiative.org)

