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UGANDA: EDUCATION PROGRAM BRINGS PEACE TO SCHOOLS IN WAR-TORN NORTHERN UGANDA

With an estimated 25,000 children and youths caught up in a conflict between government forces and rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), northern Ugandan children have endured what has been called the most neglected humanitarian crisis in the world.

Recruited unwillingly as soldiers by the LRA, many have been traumatized and were forced to commit atrocities. Now the burden of reintegrating children and youths who make it back into civic life has largely fallen on an overburdened education sector.

But with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the REPLICA program has helped restore normalcy to the lives of students and teachers alike. REPLICA – Revitalization of Education Participation and Learning in Conflict Areas – is managed and implemented by Creative Associates International, Inc. through the Basic Education Policy Support (BEPS) activity.

"Normal life has been disrupted, social structures and systems have been weakened or broken down," said George Wirefreed Opiro, the Principal Education, Guidance and Counseling Focal Point Officer of REPLICA. "The war has inbuilt in people the character of violence. This is likely to propagate violent tendencies in them even in the absence of war."

Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Education and Sports, with help from the BEPS project, came up with the program, Opiro said.

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Teachers trained in peace education methodology.

CREATIVE'S PRESIDENT AND CEO, M. CHARITO KRUVENT, AMONG WASHINGTON'S "100 MOST POWERFUL WOMEN"



M. Charito Kruvant, President and CEO of Creative Associates International, Inc. has been honored again as one of Washingtonian magazine's "100 Most Powerful Women."

The "100 Most Powerful Women" feature has appeared every three or four years since the 1970s. And over the years, Mrs. Kruvant's leadership of development efforts to help improve lives around the world has repeatedly led editors to include her among this elite group. "We look at women who can influence the agenda, can make things happen," said Leslie Milk, the Washingtonian's lifestyle editor who compiles the list.

"One example I like to use about the women we choose is, we're looking for somebody who decides what you see

on the news and not the woman that is on the news."

This year's list of the Washingtonian's top women leaders includes, Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd, Senator Hillary Clinton, delegate to Congress for the District of Columbia, Eleanor Holmes Norton, among others. Women were chosen from categories that included national powers, local leaders, legal authorities, business, labor, lobbying, educators and experts, advocates, non-profits, health and medicine, media, arts, and letters and sports.

— Alexandra Pratt

PHOTO: REPLICA, CREATIVE ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL, INC.

ALBANIA: CREATIVE PROGRAM FUNDS YWCA'S ROMA WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S ANTI-TRAFFICKING EFFORTS

At the Young Women's Christian Association in one of Tirana's suburban communities where Roma are heavily concentrated, a series of workshops raise awareness among women and children about the dangers of trafficking.

These workshops provide detailed information about trafficking, anti-trafficking laws and human rights. Since the series began in May 2005, four women have been trained as peer-educators to then train others to disseminate information and establish a non-formal structure against trafficking of women and children, to take over after the YWCA project ends in July 2006.

Efforts are also being made to raise the women's self-esteem by organizing social events after the workshops where the women celebrate Roma culture, its food, traditional clothes and jewelry as well as songs and dances. Indeed, the rousing rhythms of gypsy music have greatly influenced European musical traditions. But despite this contribution and centuries living among Europeans, the Roma continue to face poverty and discrimination more than most other minority communities on the continent.

Albania's Roma population which is estimated at 120,000 overwhelmingly lacks access to basic healthcare, adequate housing, employment and education. Because Albania's Roma women and children are also more often trafficked than the general population, there is an urgent need to raise the group's awareness about the dangers of trafficking.

The YWCA Roma project receives crucial financial support from The Albanian Initiative: Coordinated Action Against Human Trafficking (CAAHT) project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Roma children at a YWCA child activity in Tirana, funded by CAAHT.

PHOTO:
CAAHT, CREATIVE ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL, INC.



Implemented by Creative Associates International, Inc., CAAHT's mission is to strengthen the ability and coordinate the efforts of Albanian community leaders, NGOs and government entities to improve programs that decrease trafficking in human beings, improve and expand services which assist and reintegrate the victims and reduce retrafficking. To date, CAAHT has disbursed 22 grants totaling more than \$2 million to local NGOs addressing trafficking issues. The CAAHT program focuses on Albania because it is a country of origin for trafficking. In the past ten months, CAAHT grants have reached 31,820 people through prevention programs. They have also provided 207 women and children protection and reintegration assistance. Another 4,410 women and children have received assistance from a combination of stakeholders.

"I didn't know much about trafficking. I had heard only some stories about children and girls who were trafficked. I understand during the trainings who can be a trafficker and who can be a victim," said Laureta Latifaj, one of the peer-educators and a mother of two, who works selling used clothes in the streets.

Low levels of education among workshop participants and a scarcity of information contribute to misconceptions about trafficking. "At the beginning it was not very clear to them why were we talking to them about trafficking, as they thought trafficking is equal

to prostitution. At times they laughed at the information thinking trafficked girls are earning a lot of money. So we had to work hard to explain to them the difference between prostitution and trafficking," said Donika Godaj, the YWCA's coordinator for the Roma project.

The distinction is significant because the perception that trafficked victims are the same as prostitutes earns them little empathy from the community, since it is believed that they are freely engaging in a business transaction. Through discussions with the women and the viewing of videotaped testimonies from girls who have been trafficked, the YWCA is having an impact.

At one of the workshops, Meleqe Rrenja, also a peer-educator and mother of five, shared the story of a girl from her community who had been trafficked. "This girl came from Italy drugged, with her arms burned and lost her voice. She was forced to prostitute. When she came to Tirana, I helped her because I have been working with Roma women and girls who are included in the YWCA project. Using my relations with YWCA and other organizations I helped her. Now, she has a life and is married," said Rrenja.

The YWCA's Roma children's component, so far, has worked with 300 children ages 3 to 14. Through story telling methods, games, painting and singing, children learn about the dangers of trafficking. Because schools are situat-

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PANAMA: BASKET SALES A PATH TO KEEPING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL



In indigenous regions of Panama, where children toil in the fields with their families for economic survival, alternative sources of income, helped along by internet marketing of local crafts, are an avenue toward keeping children in school.

"We hope that the mothers will generate sufficient funds so that the children don't have to abandon school to work in the family fields," says Sara de la Guardia, president of Fundación Tierra Nueva, one of Creative Associates International, Inc.'s partners in the DESTINO project, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.

DESTINO combats child labor, especially in indigenous regions of Panama, where child participation in harvesting is the only means of economic survival for families living in extreme poverty. While DESTINO's farm schools provide access to education for child laborers during the harvest season, the program's income generation component, implemented by Fundación Tierra Nueva, aims to abate child labor through long-term prevention. The organization identifies vulnerable indigenous communities and through the generation of economic activity, such as basket-weaving, hopes to reduce poverty, and thus, eradicate the necessity for children to drop out of school and contribute to family revenue.

With the launch of the basket-weaving quality improvement and marketing workshops, DESTINO is reaching the most remote towns of the Emberá, settled mostly on river banks, whose people survive on subsistence farming and a traditional lifestyle. It takes about 8 hours by piragua, a dug-out canoe, from Panama City, where Tierra Nueva is based, to Corozal, the furthest community participating in the workshops. The rest of the towns are 1 to 3 hours away.

"I was fascinated by the Emberá women's baskets and the uniqueness

of their art," recalls Sara de la Guardia, an avid collector of native crafts, on her second trip to the Darien province of Panama. "I was taken aback by the amount of work it involved," she continues, "from the collection of reeds, seeds, and barks of trees that are used to make the natural dyes, to the weaving of the dyed reeds that compose the designs."

Sara is more than a native crafts enthusiast. For 15 years, she has been involved in a volunteer capacity with the indigenous people of the Darien.

Traveling the distance has paid off. Tierra Nueva has succeeded in enrolling 80 indigenous women in the workshops. The organization discovered that most of the women have made baskets before, but the quality, variety of designs and colors, and the intricacy of the stitching left room for improvement when compared to the work of other artisan women. "We anticipate that they will improve their quality to be able to compete in the local and international market," said de la Guardia.

"Our project will not only help them improve the quality of the baskets, the project will also help them deal with tourism, establish fair prices, and learn to market their products."

So far, Tierra Nueva has conducted workshops in the regions of Corozal and Naranjal on the Chico River, Lajas Blancas on the Chucunaque River, Nuevo Vigia on the Tupisa River, and Pena Bijagual, Mogotes and El Salto on the Chucunaque River and has introduced improved techniques in the creation of new designs, distinguishing different types of natural fibres, preparation of natural dyes, uniformity of stitches, and leveling of baskets. Based on a survey conducted by Tierra Nueva, the feedback received from the Emberá women has been overwhelmingly positive with

requests to extend the workshops. "I really liked the workshops," states one participant on her written evaluation. "I learned four new designs and our handicrafts teacher taught us a lot. She was so patient with us. Thank you for teaching us, thank you for everything."

While workshops are still under way, Tierra Nueva is already testing strategies for marketing the baskets. Those will include traditional approaches such as contacting store owners, selling to tourists and collectors, and organizing artisan fairs, or more innovative methods such as advertising over the internet. The internet has also helped the marketing of baskets by the Wounaan, another indigenous group in the Darien, whose web-based popularity grew tremendously over the past decade. "The Wounaan women are selling baskets faster than they can make them," said de la Guardia. "I'm sure that there's a market for the Emberá baskets as well."

A few Emberá baskets have already sold on Ebay, directly to buyers in museum gift shops. The project has also secured its own online presence through the creation of a blog, which documents the progress of the workshops and displays photos of the baskets. The organization envisions that the blog will become another way for the women to market their crafts. With 100% of the proceeds given directly to the artisans, the women of the Emberá comarcas can hope to create new opportunities for themselves and their children.

To purchase the baskets, visit www.artesanas-embera.blogspot.com

—Lazarina Todorova and Fundación Tierra Nueva

LIBERIA: BUILDING BRIDGES TO REINTEGRATE COMMUNITIES

When Liberia's 14-year civil war ended in 2003, a 15,000-strong UN peacekeeping force disarmed thousands of fighters and restored security to the country.

As Liberia began its slow transition toward democracy, it became clear that the key to the nation's future rested with its majority population, those ages 18 to 32 and younger.

In an effort to engage Liberian youths to help their communities, Creative Associates International, Inc. has provided grants to several communities to build eleven bridges and employ youths as laborers through the Liberia Transition Initiative (LTI). LTI is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives.

During the current rainy season, especially with the heavy downpours that are expected from July to October, roads and bridges in Liberia become impassable. In Monrovia, the Newport Alley Street Bridge connecting to the Mamba Point community, is particularly affected by flooding during the rainy season.

Built with one log, or at times a broken board, less than twelve inches wide, the original bridge was dangerous to cross even in the dry season, let alone in downpours. To get to the market area, people had to take a longer, circuitous route.

In talks with community residents and leaders, participants of the Community Youth Peace Education Program (CYPEP), said a new bridge was a top priority. Over the course of three months, 60 unskilled youths worked with skilled laborers to construct the bridge.

Approximately, 3,000 people will be the direct beneficiaries of the new bridge.

"The community is fully benefiting from this project and I can say that it is a very successful project," said Richard Watkins, community leader and Chairman of the Project Management Committee.

CYPEP is an outgrowth of LTI's Youth Education and Life Skills (YES) program, implemented in 735 rural communities throughout Liberia over the past two years. CYPEP works with urban youths while YES works with rural youths. Both programs work with war-affected youths ages 18 to 30 and seek to constructively engage youths to positively impact their communities.

To date, LTI has supported 333 grants targeting small communities where YES activities are being conducted with the support of four partners, Mercy Corps, Action Aid, World Vision and Talking Drum Studio. The small grants were designed to provide constructive activities for both the youth and elder populations to reform and rally around communities. Activities undertaken include skills training and construction of guest houses, community halls, market halls, latrines, sports programs, and bridges.

In the north-eastern part of Liberia, bordering Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea, YES participants and residents rehabilitated deteriorating log bridges linking six communities in Nimba County. The project covered an estimated 19 miles of roads and benefits an estimated 15,000 rural dwellers.

Constructed over a period of 2.5 months, the project enjoyed the full cooperation of locals from Tappita City to Grenpea town who also provided the materials and labor to rehabilitate the bridges. The enthusiasm from these communities for this project is reflected in its completion in less than the allotted five months. The improved bridges will enable farmers to transport their produce to market and spur trade among communities.

The small grants were dispersed over eight of Liberia's 15 counties, many of which are inaccessible during the rainy season.

Each project costs an average of \$6,500 with communities required to contribute such items as sand, gravel, crushed rocks, and labor; those contributions alone provided between five and 30 percent of the value of the project.

The projects not only improved deteriorated infrastructure but also brought disparate groups together. Among the groups were Muslim and Christian youths, who had fought each other in the October 2004 riots, but joined to work toward the goal of improving the community.

"During the alley bridge construction at Newport Street, I interacted with different groups that enabled me to develop an idea of working with a community. I thank the YES program for this initiative on the part of the youth. With this program the youth will be looking at positive things and turning their backs on negative things," said Charles Addo, a member of the technical staff who worked on the bridge.

—Alexandra Pratt and LTI staff: James Yarsiah, Mike Sarco, Mardia Warner and Francis Carter.



A bridge to community reintegration.

AFGHANISTAN: BESST & MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WORK TO BUILD EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE

UNICEF estimates that 4.8 million children are enrolled in Afghanistan's primary and secondary schools. While the Ministry of Education's capacity to deliver quality education for all has made great strides in the last few years, much remains to be done.

Current estimates of the teacher population indicate the country has 144,000 teachers, but of these only 300 hold master's degrees and 6,000 bachelor's degrees—the remainder have varying degrees of professional teaching qualifications.

The launching in Kabul this spring of the Building Education Support Systems for Teachers (BESST) aims to improve teaching and support for teacher education programs.

Designed to work with the central and provincial ministries, BESST will work to formalize the Afghan education system so that by the project's fifth and final year the Ministry of Education will be further empowered to carry out teacher training, with the same level of quality throughout the country.

"Right now in Afghanistan there's not a very clear formula for what it takes to become a teacher, BESST is collaborating with the Ministry of Education to standardize teacher qualifications," said Thea Anderson, project manager for BESST at Creative Associates International, Inc. which is implementing the project.

BESST is a follow-on to the Afghanistan Primary Education Project (APEP) which Creative Associates implemented successfully from 2003 to 2006. Under APEP, more than 170,000 overage students, many of which were girls, were educated in accelerated learning classes, and thousands of teachers were trained in non-formal education

methodologies. "Currently many of the teachers in the APEP accelerated learning classes as well as other NGO administered classes are not formally certified by the Ministry of Education. BESST will work to link many of these teachers into the formal ministry system," said Anderson.

The BESST launch was conducted over a two-day workshop. Attendees included Ministry of Education representatives from 13 provinces, including the Minister of Education, representatives from the ministry's teacher education and planning departments, President Hamid Karzai's special representative for education, Creative Associates' staff and implementing partners.

"Right now in Afghanistan there's not a very clear formula for what it takes to become a teacher, BESST is collaborating with the Ministry of Education to standardize teacher qualifications"

**Thea Anderson
Project Manager
BESST**

BESST's emphasis on strengthening the system for training primary teachers reflects a shared understanding between donors and the MOE that teachers require support from all factions of the national education organism. It recognizes that teachers need to receive encouragement from school administrators and supervisors as well as opportunities for additional skills upgrading.

Considered a timely project for reforming the education system and its development, BESST also stands out because it aims to have the maximum amount of involvement from the Ministry of Education in designing

and implementing programs. Work in the provinces will begin at the end of 2006, when Creative's implementing partners will provide trainings for Ministry of Education senior personnel, head masters and head teachers.

Instructional support staff from provincial and district offices need to learn student-centered instructional techniques so they can provide sound coaching and recommendations to teachers. At present, the project is working at the central ministry level planning activities for the next five years. Other components of the project will include working with the ministry's finance office, developing in-service and pre-service curriculum for primary level teachers, building the capacity of two-year teacher training colleges, and teacher accreditation systems.

APEP was designed as an emergency response to Afghanistan's dilapidated education system after decades of war and has worked in 17 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. BESST will have a wider reach although it will have its own challenges. "BESST will be working throughout Afghanistan through a phased roll out over two years. Reconstruction and economic development require a workforce with a solid foundation in both literacy and numeracy, as well as a range of specialized skills. A functional democracy requires a population able to be informed and make informed judgments about government and the issues it should address," Anderson said.

—Alexandra Pratt



PHOTO: CHARLES ALLMAN

NIGERIA: PTAS AND TEACHER TRAINING BOOST IMPACT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

About 7 million Nigerian primary school age children do not attend school, and of these, about 62 percent are girls.

Despite Nigeria's vast oil wealth, two-thirds of its 132 million people, who comprise the largest population in Africa, live on less than \$1 a day. Moreover, the country's maternal and child survival death rates remain discouragingly high. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development, improving the quality and delivery of health and education stands to have a significant impact not only on Nigeria, but on the region as well.

But improvement is underway thanks to COMPASS, which stands for Community Participation for Action in the Social Sector, a USAID-funded integrated health and education project led by Pathfinder International. COMPASS is working in partnership with the Government of Nigeria to improve the quality of health and education services at community level in five target states across the country. \

Launched in 2004, the project gathers five American and four Nigerian partners including Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACE-FA), one of the largest education "umbrella" organizations in Nigeria. Creative Associates International, Inc. based in Washington, D.C., manages its basic education component.

Creative Associates is a 27-year-old development services firm that currently implements education and civil society programs in 15 countries, including Nigeria.

Creative's basic education component is increasing the enrollment rates of girls, strengthening Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and providing teacher training support in 1,400 public primary and Islamic schools in Kano and Lagos states as well as a local government area in Kano, Nasarawa,. Creative also conducts pre-service training activities in conjunction with colleges of education in these states. Through these activities, COMPASS seeks to establish sustainable educational reforms in the communities where it is working.

Because many teachers at the primary school level are under-qualified, COMPASS teacher training activities have had a profound effect. While many public school teachers attended secondary school, they frequently did not receive teacher training. In the Islamic schools, teachers often receive only religious training and so are unable to instruct their students in math, science, social studies, and health subjects.

COMPASS targets Islamic as well as public primary schools in its training interventions. In the north, Islamic schools reach a larger number of stu-

dents, especially girls, than their public counterparts. In Kano and Lagos states, COMPASS has helped many Islamic school teachers integrate core subjects from the national curriculum into their courses of study.

Over the course of the project, Creative will train about 20,000 public and Islamic primary school teachers in literacy, numeracy, and child-centered learning. "Over 4,000 teachers have been trained [in Kano] since COMPASS began its intervention," said Aminu Tafida, director of school services with the State Universal Education Board in the northern and predominantly Muslim state of Kano.

In order to upgrade the quality of classroom instruction, COMPASS trains public and Islamic primary school teachers in student-centered learning, the development of teaching aids, and techniques for increasing student participation in the classroom.

"The COMPASS in-service training package is helping a lot in injecting new skills and orientation for our teachers," Tafida said. "Changes are evident in the way teachers interact with pupils and the way the teachers appreciate and show enthusiasm in working together. We are optimistic that the desired attitudinal and professional change will be achieved."

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PHOTO BY: EUDCAN, A CREATIVE PARTNER



“The COMPASS project has been very helpful to the school with the acquisition of knowledge, skills and the change in attitudes to education, particularly for girls. **”**

Abu Mohammed Gawuna, PTA chairman of Gawuna Special Primary School in central Nasarawa state.

In many public and Islamic schools, teachers and pupils must work under leaking roofs, and without latrines, blackboards, and other basics. Because the government cannot meet the vast infrastructure needs of these schools, the schools rely on PTAs to provide resources and assistance. COMPASS therefore provides PTAs with sub-grants to finance the improvement of school infrastructure. PTA members have identified the lack of latrines at their schools as a primary factor in low attendance, especially among girls. The construction of latrines, along with project efforts to change attitudes towards girls' education, has been a significant factor in increasing girls' enrollment.

COMPASS conducts training programs for PTA members to encourage parental involvement in school management and rehabilitation. In training sessions, PTA members learn how to conduct needs assessments, set priorities, increase organizational skills, and campaign for girls' education.

"The series of trainings organized and conducted by COMPASS, in which we actively participated, have greatly enhanced our knowledge, skills and attitudes in the educational affairs of the school. This is evident from our ability to mobilize the community and leverage resources for the construction of a four-seat toilet block," said Abu Mohammed Gawuna, PTA chairman of Gawuna Special Primary School in central Nasarawa.

"The COMPASS project has been very helpful to the school with the acquisition of knowledge, skills and the change in attitudes to education, particularly for girls," said Gawuna.

By 2009, the COMPASS project is expected to better the lives of 23 million Nigerians. Because of the crucial roles girls play as mothers and family custodians, the project's achievements in increasing girls' enrolment, in both public and Islamic schools, will be especially critical to the development of their communities.

— Alexandra Pratt with reporting by Adamu Khalid, COMPASS Senior Community Mobilization/PTA Training Coordinator in Abuja, Nigeria

NICARAGUA: CREATIVE, PARTNERS HELP 'GET OUT THE VOTE'

Creative Associates International, Inc. is implementing an innovative multimedia public awareness campaign to Get Out the Vote (GOTV) called "You Have a Voice: Make it Heard" to engage Nicaraguan voters and encourage strong turnouts in Nicaragua's presidential election on Nov. 5th.

For the first time in recent history, voters will have their pick from a plurality of political parties spanning the spectrum from left to right.

Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the GOTV campaign involves working in close collaboration with local partners to create a blend of television, radio, print and electronic media products to boost voter awareness of the importance of democracy and civic participation.

The Creative Associates-managed campaign will primarily target disenfranchised citizens, such as youths, women

and rural dwellers, who need both information and encouragement to become active in Nicaragua's political discourse.



Creative and its local partners will produce and air up to 16 television and radio announcements over the next four months. In addition, the program will work with a local playwright to develop, produce and air a radio soap opera series. The series will frame Nicaragua's current situation in the context of a multi-generational family's dreams, aspirations and fears and stress the need for citizen participation to ensure a brighter future. The shows

will be tailored to regional interests, concerns, perspectives and languages.

With local partners as resources, Creative will conduct focus group discussions nationwide, continuously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the program, using this information to re-calibrate the messages as necessary. The episodes will also be recorded to CD and cassettes for wide distribution to schools, churches, NGOs and other civic groups.

The campaign also includes a human rights component. Through sub grants to the Permanent Human Rights Committee, assistance will be provided in documenting past human rights abuses and providing technical support for bringing selected cases to court, and counseling for victim's relatives.

— CIT and Creative Times staff.

PHILIPPINES: MATH TRAINING ADDS UP TO NEW SKILLS

For 33-year old Melanie Olis of Ulotanga Central School in Mindanao, teaching mathematics has always posed a challenge. Olis, who teaches third grade, welcomes suggestions to spice up the repetitive drills for her students.

"Pupils may learn to add numbers up to three digits in a month or two, but give them a problem close to real-life situations, and they will find it difficult to apply what they studied in class," said Olis who, along with 135 teachers from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and surrounding conflict-affected areas, underwent a 10-day training last summer in Zamboanga City.

The training was designed in response to the alarming result of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, which rates students' mathematics and science achievement. Previous test results ranked the Philippines second from the bottom next to Bangladesh in the whole of Asia. To improve students' proficiency in these subjects, the USAID-funded Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS) project, in partnership with the Department of Education, is implementing in-service trainings on math, science, as well as English, for teachers of grades one to three in Mindanao.

During the training, Olis realized what she had been missing all these years. Her pupils found it difficult to apply math outside the classroom even though they understood the subject.

"I once had three students, siblings from a family of fisherfolk. They could not attend school regularly because they had to help sell fish in the market. The older two brothers attended grade three when they were already 12 and 14 years old. Alas, only the youngest passed my grade level," said Olis.

The brothers soon dropped out of school. But when Olis chanced upon them at their stall in the market, what she found caught her by surprise, and confirmed that students learn best when provided with real life problems. "I saw that they could give the exact change to their buyers without batting an eyelash," said Olis.

The math training incorporates concepts such as whole numbers, fractions, measurement, money, pictograph and geometry. Applying the Practical Work Approach, it uses real-life situations and indigenous materials, such as agricultural and fishing items in teaching.



A participant in the EQuALLS-led 10-day teacher training.

PHOTO: EQUALS STAFF

The teachers were shown how to encourage pupils to explore theories, solve practical problems, and defend their answers using their own formula.

"One common misconception about teaching math among teachers is that pupils are not allowed to explore different ways of solving problems. They are taught to follow formulas prescribed in the textbook, forcing them to memorize just to pass exams. When a problem that needs plain logic is presented, they get lost," explained Norma Cajilig, a University of the Philippines' math and science education teacher.

The most common misconceptions occur in the most basic lessons like addition. For instance, experienced teachers were said to have objected to the statement that when teaching addition, teachers should not use

objects such as chairs and balls or pencils and flowers to avoid disconnecting mathematics from the real world.

"A few ridiculed us for questioning old practices. But when we said, well if you really think about it, who adds chairs and balls in real life anyway? And they just laughed," said Juvelyn Reyes, a grade one teacher from Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte. Ultimately, mathematics loses its meaning in the real world because teachers and textbooks use far-fetched objects and sometimes even unusual references.

"When the transition from concrete to semi-abstract to abstract drifts into a world full of objects so unlike the realities of the community, children resort to looking at mathematics as just a mere subject in class. When the class is over, mathematics is also over," explained Professor Bennie Maratas from the Mindanao State University in Tawi-Tawi.

Fortunately, opportunities to correct these misconceptions abound. With assistance from EQuALLS, the 211 teachers, who attended the summer workshop, trained a total of 4,246 fellow teachers in mathematics, most of whom have also undergone an enhancement training to polish their pedagogical skills.

"It is a critical and urgent situation. We want our pupils to perform better in math so we have to train our teachers how to do it. These teachers are expected to handle nearly 100,000 grade one to grade three pupils in a year in Mindanao!," said Ina Aquino, EQuALLS In-School Manager. EQuALLS supplements these training workshops by supplying books, reference materials, teaching aids, and desks to recipient schools to help provide a better learning environment for pupils.

—Janice Sevilla of the EQuALLS Project.

UGANDA: EDUCATION PROGRAM BRINGS PEACE TO SCHOOLS IN WAR-TORN NORTHERN UGANDA

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REPLICA uses an integrated approach that includes peace education, psychosocial support, and performing arts as tools to educate and promote behavioral change in students. Comprehensive in scope, the project also works with teachers, many of whom are as traumatized as their students, to improve their teaching and classroom management skills and to boost their morale. So that its effects will be sustained, REPLICA has secured the participation of parents, religious and cultural leaders, civil servants and other members of the community in an effort to improve schools as well as promote girls' enrollment.

Thirty model schools located throughout 10 northern Ugandan districts are the beneficiaries of the REPLICA program. Before the program began, drop-out rates among students, especially girls, were significantly higher.

Schools not only lacked separate girls and boys' latrines, they had none at all, making it especially difficult for adolescent girls to attend. But with REPLICA's intervention, parents and community members mobilized to build latrines and generally improve their school's infrastructure. Other factors also contributed to high drop out rates. Demoralized and unskilled in discipline techniques, teachers often beat their students further encouraging them to leave school.

"It's surprising that for once in a long time, children now approach teachers by themselves," said Ulama Simon, head teacher at Abera P7 Primary School. "Yet, in the past even when a teacher calls a child, she or he would just run away. With the presence of the REPLICA program, we rarely get any drop out cases now and the enrollment rates in the school are increasing tremendously."



Female students in a REPLICA-supported school in northern Uganda.

ties so that they can pass on the messages of peace and encourage parents to take responsibility for their children's education.

"Some children in the school used to insult those children who were once abducted by the LRA rebels and in response they [the abducted children] would just beat them. However, the returnees now feel very comfortable in school, just like us," said 14-year old Olar Richard Apena, a pupil at Abera P7 Primary School. "As the head of the guidance and counseling club in our school, I feel very proud because I help my fellow pupils when they have a misunderstanding. I talk to them and advise them never to use violence to solve disputes. The REPLICA program was a blessing to us because it has brought about peace in our school and helps children to stay in school."

There are 30 districts in northern Uganda affected by the war and USAID hopes that REPLICA can eventually be expanded so that all of those affected by the war may benefit from the program. "I am convinced that the long sought solution has been found." REPLICA is "real hope for the north and other people in conflict and post conflict situations," said Opiro.

—Alexandra Pratt with reporting by Florence Sebutinde, BEPS REPLICA Consultant in Uganda.

ALBANIA: CREATIVE PROGRAM FUNDS YWCA'S ROMA WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S ANTI-TRAFFICKING EFFORTS

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ed far from the community and mistreatment by teachers and non-Roma children, among other reasons, many Roma children do not attend school. As a result, many leave school to spend their days begging in the streets where they are vulnerable to the ploys of traffickers. So, the YWCA also teaches

them that their risk of being exploited increases greatly when they opt to beg on the streets rather than attend school. "We also invited a Roma teacher to tell them the beautiful things children do and learn at school. She invited them to visit the school any time they wanted to. Their mothers were

also present and some of the children asked them if they could take them to the school," said Godaj.

—Alexandra Pratt with reporting by Donika Godaj, YWCA Roma Project Coordinator in Tirana, Albania



NEW FACES IN WASHINGTON, D.C. AND FIELD



Harley Black joins the Administrative Services Unit as Creative's new Procurement and Logistics Manager.

Harley has 12 years of experience in the procurement of products for government contracts. Before joining Creative, he was a Procurement Manager for BearingPoint, Inc. Harley is experienced in preparing RFPs and RFQs in accordance with USAID regulations and ensuring all required approvals are met prior to purchase of any items to be reimbursed by USAID.

Harley attended the Fishburn Military School and Lord Fairfax Community College, both in Virginia.

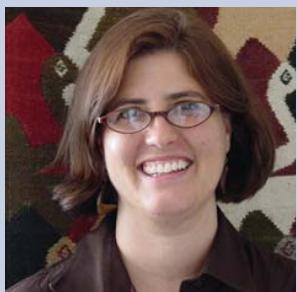
Ellen Giordano joins the Business Development unit as a Proposal Coordinator. Ellen has ten years of international and US-based management experience, including six years as a senior field office manager, overseeing USAID-funded humanitarian and transitional development programs.

Before joining Creative, she was the Director of Development at the Institute for Community Economics in Springfield, MA., where she was the lead designer and writer for grant proposals, including successful federal grant submissions. She also oversaw fundraising and grant solicitation from institutional and individual donors for national non-profit housing and community development.



Before that, she served as a Director at the Armenia field office for the Save the Children Federation. There, she managed a \$17 million USAID-funded program portfolio that included administering humanitarian assistance grants to international and local non-profits in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ellen received a master's degree in International Economics, Russian and East European History/Politics at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C., and a bachelor's degree in International Relations at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA. She is fluent in Russian and French.



Lisa Hartenberger joins Creative as a Project Manager in Liberia for the Communities in Transition division. Lisa has extensive development experience working for USAID and the Education Development Center with a focus in media development policy in transitional nations, civic education and civil society strengthening, and using radio in development communications.

Before Creative, she served as a civics education specialist for EDC in Nairobi, Kenya, where she designed radio-based civics education programming for Sudan Radio Service, a USAID/Office of Transition Initiatives-funded project to increase the access of southern Sudanese to unbiased news and information.

Before that, she was an education advisor for USAID in Kabul, Afghanistan where she researched and wrote needs assessments for the USAID Mission, focusing on emergency needs in the formal primary school system and strategies for increasing girls' access to education. There, she also prepared the RFP for the Afghanistan Primary Education Project (APEP), and supervised APEP contractors and other USAID-funded education projects.

Lisa received a doctoral degree in International Communications at the University of Texas at Austin, and a bachelor's degree in French from the University of California, Los Angeles. In addition to French, she is fluent in Spanish.



Chau Lim joins Creative's Office of Finance and Contracts as an Accounting Manager with more than 20 years of accounting experience.

Before Creative, Chau was a Senior Accounting Manager at K. Hovnanian Homes in Chantilly, Virginia. Before that, she served as a Financial Reporting Manager for Wiley Rein & Fielding LLP in Washington, D.C.

Chau received a bachelor's degree in accounting at Strayer University in Washington, D.C.

Jose Xet Mull joins the Afghanistan Primary Education Program (APEP)/Accelerated Learning (AL) Project as a Finance Manager. Jose has been a familiar face at Creative. For more than eight years he served as financial and administrative coordinator supporting projects in Guatemala. Before joining Creative, Jose worked for Catholic Relief Services in Guatemala. Jose is also studying for a degree in public accounting at the Centro Universitario de Occidente in Guatemala.



Mariela López-Vargas joins Creative as a Chief of Party for the Nicaragua Get Out the Vote (GOTV) project, a U.S. Department of State-funded program. Mariela has international experience of more than 15 years, specializing in the areas of social communication, program management and monitoring and evaluation of international development initiatives related to political processes.

Before Creative, she was Chief of Party for the International Foundation for Election Systems, where she was responsible for program planning and project implementation of the first USAID-funded initiative to "Support Electoral and Political Processes in Egypt."

Before that, she served as a Senior Election Advisor to the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, where she facilitated and participated in the training of members of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI). Based in Amman, Jordan, she also advised in areas that included civic education and public outreach and training of senior commission staff, journalists, and IECI monitors along with manual development and product design.

Mariela received a bachelor's degree in fine arts and graphic design in San José, Costa Rica. She is fluent in Spanish and Portuguese.

NEW FACES

PHOTOS BY: LAZARINA TODOROVA

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PHOTO OF THE SEASON



PHOTO BY: GRUPOS DE MUJERES ARTESANAS EMBÉRA / NUEVO VIGIA, DARIEN, PANAMA, APRIL 2006

A participant in an organizational workshop in the indigenous Nuevo Vigia townsite, conducted by Fundación Tierra Nueva, one of Creative's DESTINO implementing partners. Fundación Tierra Nueva is training 80 Embera Women in the improvement and marketing of the world famous Darien baskets. One hundred percent of the proceeds from the sales go directly to the women artisans. Read more on page 3.

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