



## International Day of Peace Key Note Address

*Yumbe, Uganda | September 21, 2011*

By Lindsay McClain, Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)--

Ladies and gentlemen, you are most welcome to today's community performance which falls on the internationally-recognized International Day of Peace, or Peace Day. My name is Lindsay McClain and I work for the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) based in Gulu. JRP is an NGO that works together with grassroots, war-affected communities on issues related to justice and reconciliation. We have had programmes in West Nile for over a year, mainly in working with the West Nile Kony Rebel War Victims Association in Arua, but expanded our activities to include a theater project in Yumbe in June. We hope this is not the first nor the last time you see us here.

Today's community theatre performance coincides with an annual event that takes place every year on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, International Day of Peace, or Peace Day. This year's national Peace Day celebrations are being held in Gulu, but we have decided to celebrate here today with you, our partners, the people of Yumbe.

This address aims to provide you with a brief background on Peace Day, its origins and objectives, and this year's theme, "Make your voice heard."

The International Day of Peace was established by a United Nations resolution in 1981 to coincide with the opening of the General Assembly. The first Peace Day was celebrated in September 1982. The day aims to provide an opportunity for individuals, organizations and nations to create practical acts of peace on a shared date.

According to its founders, "Peace Day should be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples."

Since its inception, Peace Day has marked the world's progress toward peace. It has grown to include millions of people in all parts of the world, and each year events are organized to commemorate and celebrate this day. Events range in scale from private gatherings to public concerts and forums where hundreds of thousands of people participate. Anyone, anywhere can celebrate Peace Day.

Peace Day has three guiding principles. The first, 'peace within,' focuses on each person's internal peace within him or herself. The second, 'peace without,' focuses on peace throughout the larger community and world. The third, 'peace year round,' focuses on making commitments to peace on a daily basis that extends beyond this one-day event.

The United Nations organizers of International Day of Peace felt that this year, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peace Day, it is important to focus on making ordinary people's voices heard. And so this year's theme, "Make your voice heard," is a very special and relevant one in Yumbe, West Nile and the greater north because conflict has silenced so many.

This theme comes at a time when Yumbe and the people of West Nile are looking forward to celebrating 10 years of the Yumbe Peace Accord next year. This was a memorable event when the children of West Nile listened to their elders and the community members and laid down their arms for the sake of peace and for peace to prevail. But if you look back to 10 years ago, what are the peace dividends? What progress have we made so far and what do we still need to do together? What legacy are we leaving for the young generation to learn from?

Today's community performance by survivors of conflict in Yumbe is a shining example of how community members can make their voices be heard as Ugandans debate issues related to justice and reconciliation. Through creative channels like theatre, song and dance, you too can make your voice be heard and capture stakeholders' and government's attention on development, accountability, reparations and much more. As JRP, we are ready and willing to build your capacity and provide guidance on how to maximize the effectiveness of your advocacy efforts for sustainable peace and reconciliation in your communities. You can feel free to approach any of the JRP staff throughout the day to discuss your ideas with us.

Today's event is supported in part by JRP and the MAYANK Development Association. On behalf of these two organizations, I would like to thank you, the community, for coming to show your support both of the day and of your colleagues performing in today's community performance.

Without taking too much time out of today's programme, I would once again like to welcome you to Yumbe's International Day of Peace celebrations and the community theater performance, and hope the discussions that follow will be lively and fruitful in 'making your voices be heard.' Thank you.