

## **International Justice/ICC: Aug '08**

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Series of probing reports expose problems facing development work in northern Uganda. The skills and knowledge acquired by trainees who attended an IWPR investigative reporting seminar in Uganda have produced a series uncovering corruption that is sabotaging the rebuilding of the north.

IWPR's Africa editor Peter Eichstaedt held the informal workshops in investigative reporting techniques from June 9 to 13 in Lira and Gulu.

The training was in preparation for the investigative reporting project concerned with the reconstruction and redevelopment of northern Uganda in the wake of the 20-year war with the rebel Lord's Resistance Army, LRA.

The training provided the reporters with the tools they require to produce accurate investigative pieces. Topics covered included health, education, agriculture and the economy.

"When you are handling a story, your story should not be one-sided," Eichstaedt told the trainees. "Talk to many sources including the accused. Don't put your own opinion into a story. Separate facts from opinion, write facts and verify information."

He urged journalists to provide statistics where relevant and talk to experts, government officials and NGOs to find out what is being done to address specific problems. Eichstaedt told us that speaking of problems without suggesting remedies is not useful journalism.

After the training we were able to discuss ideas before beginning work on the stories. We used local radio stations, relatives and friends as our news sources. We also asked people in war-affected communities what issues affected them most and then followed up on their comments.

The subsequent series, published in August, dealt with issues ranging from AIDS and education to the psychological trauma caused by war. One piece, by Patrick Okino in Dokolo, found that former refugees, who had been dependent on food handouts for years, are working the land again with some success.

Another piece by Okino looked at the recently launched redevelopment plan and questioned whether it would succeed.

The series has had a big impact in Uganda.

A story looking into suspected corruption relating to a long-running reconstruction project in the north has even prompted an inquiry.

Within days of being published by IWPR, the article Northern Aid Programme Probed, caught the attention

of World Bank officials in northern Uganda.

The World Bank is the primary funder of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, NUSAF - a government agency responsible for managing projects to rebuild the north - which has been the focus of a criminal investigation into fraud allegations and was the subject of the IWPR story.

The World Bank sent the story immediately to investigators of the Inspector General of Government, IGG - a government agency tasked with eliminating corruption and abuse of office.

IWPR understands that IGG officials immediately launched an inquiry based on the article, which reported that 20 suspects faced fraud charges following a police investigation.

Copies of the IWPR stories featuring the corruption scandal have also been circulated to all district offices in the Lira region.

**Location:** Africa

**Topic:** Project Highlight

**Focus:** ICC - International Criminal Court

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