

barefoot workshops

A RIVER BLUE



Painted by A River Blue Youth Participant
©Barefoot Workshops, inc.

In 1987, Joseph Kony started a rebel movement to overthrow the government of Uganda. The rebel movement is now known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). For two decades, LRA has been battling the Government of Uganda (GOU) for political power.

It is estimated that 80% of Kony's army is made up of children who have been violently abducted from their homes and forced to be soldiers, laborers and, in the case of girls, sex slaves. More than 25,000 children have been kidnapped by the LRA and thousands more are left homeless and without families. Children must find their way to IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps where they can hopefully find protection from the rebels. Many of these children suffer post-traumatic stress disorder from witnessing brutal killings, often times of a parent or sibling.

According to the United Nations, more than 1.7 million people have been forced from their homes into displacement camps. These people are unable to farm due to the war and the international food assistance is insufficient to provide for all the camps. Illness is rampant because the part of the country is too unstable for humanitarian aid agencies or the Ugandan government to provide regular health services.



Alepdong IDP Camp, Northern Uganda

Life in IDP camps is filled with hardships. Water is scarce. For example, in Alepdong Camp there are only three water sources for roughly 23,000 people. Most children survive on one meal a day consisting of posho (ground corn) and soy.

In August 2006 Barefoot **barefoot workshops** Workshops sponsored a music, drama, and art festival bringing 100 kids from three IDP camps together to celebrate their creative vision and passion for the arts. The camps represented included Aloi Camp, Alepdong Camp, and Amoro Camp; which all gathered at Alepdong Camp. The festival kicked off the beginning of A River Blue project, which has now established a permanent space in Alepdong Camp that will be used for rehabilitation and vocational training for kids who live in Alepdong and surrounding camps.



A River Blue Choir

A River Blue Project is an arts empowerment project for the children of Alepdong, Aloi and Amoro IDP camps in Lira, Uganda. For the most part, the foreign aid that has been provided is not sufficient to help these children, and they have been largely neglected by the international community. A River Blue Project has already empowered these children by giving them the chance to sing, perform drama and create art that expresses their emotions. No longer will they be silenced. Through their voices and art, these children will not only heal themselves but they will also educate the international community on what life is like for them.



A River Blue participant with her artwork

even he uses mixed media in his own art. The kids were given sets of charcoal, oil pastels, watercolor, black pencil and an assortment of paper to create their artwork.

Musician and artist, Joseph Arthur, traveled with Chandler and Barefoot Workshops to participate in the festival. Joseph wrote the song "A River Blue", and was accompanied by all 100 youth participants who sang on the track with him. The track, along with other songs from the youth, will be released on a CD. Joseph spent much of his time with a digital field recorder capturing songs on and off the stage. He was also able to record adult performances in Alepdong Camp. In addition to music and drama, the festival gave participants the opportunity to learn how to paint. Joseph explained to them how



Joseph Arthur & kids

Cecily Pingree (*Tell Us The **barefoot** Truth*) and Jason Mann (*Animas Perdidas*) filmed the festival **workshops** throughout the week and will be making a documentary following the creation of the music and art. The film will also explain what life has been like for the children. A short 5-minute cut of the film will be available as a free download when A River Blue music is downloaded via the internet.



Profits from the sale of A River Blue music, art, and art-book will go to the establishment of A River Blue Rehabilitation & Vocational Center at Alepdong Camp in Uganda. Alepdong Camp has already donated a structure to Barefoot that was never completed due to lack of funding. The building contains four large rooms each with an office/storage space. All that is needed are windows, doors, concrete floors and a coat

of paint; and Barefoot Workshops can begin securing art supplies and vocational training equipment for the students.

Younger children will attend the art/music rehabilitation program where they will explore painting and singing as a way to express the trauma of what they have experienced. Kids 16 and up will be allowed to participate in the art/music rehabilitation but they will also be encouraged to attend the vocational training program. Barefoot wants to help develop a long-term plan. Through vocational training in carpentry and sewing, the youth can become self-sufficient and earn their own income, thereby allowing them to return to their villages as contributors.



Daniel Adams and Shane Gilbert from the Ugandan NGO Jangu Tuzine (Come, Let's Dance!) helped to organize the festival months in advance. Many days were spent meeting with local officials, organizing how to feed and house 100 kids, accommodations for the crew from the USA and making sure "A River Blue" was ready to record once they arrived. Daniel traveled with Barefoot up to Alepdong and served as a field producer for the project. He was a key player during the festival; from organizing music/drama performances, to painting workshops and helping with the documentary.



George Mawa, director of **barefoot workshops** Obangatek Orphanage helped organize the music component of the project by placing choir directors to lead each group of kids in the IDP camps. Weeks before, students were rehearsing songs and drama at Aloi Camp, located about 50k's out of Lira Town. Okodi Bob Jimmy, who is a Youth Director running a War Child sponsored child friendly space within Aloi Camp, helped organize rehearsals in the camps and also helped produce the festival. Bob was present every day to make sure all activities ran smoothly.

By the end of the festival roughly 250 pieces of artwork had been created; countless drama and choir performances were seen by crowds of people living in Alepdong IDP Camp; Joseph had recorded some 20 different songs plus different versions A River Blue; and the film crew had recorded 45 hours of footage including interviews from 40 of the 100 kids. The kids experienced A River Blue Festival as a way to help them process their past by sharing tragedies that they had all lived. Using these different artistic mediums to explore the past is the first step to getting these children look towards to the future. The festival proved that; while these kids have endured some of the worst situations imaginable, they still have the ability to overcome and succeed. At the end of the day sometimes the simplicity of just being able to smile and laugh can make us endure and look forward.



Because A River Blue is a project of Barefoot Workshops, a 501c3 not for profit, all donations are tax deductible. If you would like more information please contact Chandler Griffin at chandler@barefootworkshops.com.

Chandler Griffin is a New York City based independent documentary filmmaker and educator. His projects have taken him to film and teach in Latin America, North America, the UK, Europe, Africa, and India. Chandler is the Founder and Executive Director of Barefoot Workshops; a media, art, and music based educational organization where adults and youth are taught video, photography, music, and art as a way to document their surroundings, make change in the world and most importantly make change in them-selves. Sponsors include Canon, Apple, Bogen Imaging Sennheiser, Tiffen, Anton Bauer, Lowel, and many other companies. He is a Founding Member of Video Volunteers, a not-for-profit aimed at spreading the use of video as a tool to alleviate poverty and create social transformation in the developing



world; and is on the Global Insight Advisory Committee which is part of the Jackson Hole Film Festival with the goal of using film and panel discussions to educate, inspire and increase response to often ignored human rights crises around the world. Chandler also started The Arnold And Friends Fund and Registered Redneck which both work in Zimbabwe helping orphans. He has worked with Navsarjan Trust, 1 Giant Leap, PBS, The American Cancer Society, FXB, The Ford Foundation, The RFK Center for Human Rights, FilmAid International, Heifer International and is presently developing a video program with FXB's staff and beneficiaries in Rwanda. He is currently producing a feature documentary about Cri-Du-Chat (5P-) Syndrome.

Joseph Arthur



Joseph Arthur's debut album, *BIG CITY SECRETS*, came out for Real World Records in 1997, after Peter Gabriel casually listened to his demo tape. Two years later, he recorded an EP called *VACANCY*, which earned him a Grammy for the artistic packaging. After releasing 4 EPs called *JUNKYARD HEARTS*, his third album, called *REDEMPTION'S SON*, came out in May 2002. In the middle of a long and successful tour during which performances were, to a good extent, recorded and sold immediately after the last note had been played, he found time to release one more album: an alternative rock project called *HOLDING THE VOID*. Summer 2003 saw him on tour with Tracy Chapman in the US. After signing a new recording contract with Vector Recordings, Joseph finished working on what is his third 'official' full album, *OUR SHADOWS WILL REMAIN*. While touring the US alone and with Joan Wasser, a new Ep called *AND THE THIEVES ARE GONE* came out in December 2004. Shortly afterwards, Joseph went on a short and very successful tour with Ram throughout Europe. Joseph spent 2005 again on tour: US first, UK shortly afterwards, then some summer festivals and finally a good amount of solo appearances around Europe during the second half of the year. During many of these shows, he experimented new artistic paths by painting and playing simultaneously onstage.

Chandler Griffin



Cecily Pingree is a freelance documentary filmmaker based in her hometown on the island of North Haven, Maine and in New York City. She has spent her film career making documentaries focused on political and social issues and doing commercial short films and editing. Her major distributed work, which she shot and co-directed, is a feature length documentary called "Tell Us The Truth". The film follows Billy Bragg, Steve Earle, The Coup, Tom Morello and many other musicians as they tour country speaking out on media consolidation and the FTAA Trade Agreement.

Cecily has also done independent and commercial work shooting, directing and editing short films for Angela Adams design, Gretel design, Dance Philm, Bringing Theory to Practice, Global Peace Initiative India, FXB, and several small Maine local non-profits. Cecily also worked in 2005-2006 assistant editing at Big Mouth Productions in New York City.

Jason Mann



Jason Mann is a filmmaker, photographer and erstwhile musician from Rockland, Maine. He graduated from Tufts University in 2002 with a degree in English. Jason has worked as a key grip, gaffer, cinematographer and editor on several independent films and commercial projects.

In 2005, he completed a documentary short on former Squirrel Nut Zippers front man Jimbo Mathis, *Knockdown*. He is currently editing a documentary feature by Monika Navarro, *Animas Perdidas/Lost Souls*, that will appear at the IFP Market in New York in September, 2006.

barefōōt wōrkshōps

