III. PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Peace Education and Guidance Counseling for Secondary Schools

BACKGROUND

SPRING and its partner the United Movement to End Child Soldiering (UMECS) launched the one year pilot project *Peace Education and Guidance Counseling for Secondary Schools in Northern Uganda* project in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to help children rebuild their lives and improve overall reconciliation in northern Uganda. The project has been extremely successful achieving the following results:

- Successfully partnered with the Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Centre and Makerere University and developed peace education and guidance counseling curricula;
- Trained, monitored and evaluated 100 teachers from seven secondary schools and one teachers college in peace education and guidance and counseling;
- Brought peace education classes and psycho-social counseling to more than 2,400 students;
- Reduced student strikes and improved student-teacher relationships
- Earned praise from the President of Uganda, who listed the peace education and guidance and counseling program as one of the Ministry of Education’s best achievements in his state of the nation speech to Parliament in June 2010.

OPPORTUNITY

SPRING’s pilot project with UMECS is currently the only initiative of its kind in Uganda. It has strong support from the Ministry of Education and has been greatly appreciated by the students and teachers in the pilot secondary schools where it is being implemented. Although developed and implemented in the north, the model was designed to be relevant for secondary schools across the country. Now in the final stages of the project, both UMECS and SPRING are looking for interested partners to help scale up the project on a national level. On September 25th 2010, SPRING and UMECS will be organizing a *Peace Education Gala* in Kampala to showcase the achievements and impacts of the project. This event will be an excellent opportunity for USAID and other donors to learn more about the success of the project and why it is an important component of secondary school education.

RECOMMENDATION FOR CONTINUITY

USAID’s education team should support the efforts of the Ministry of Education (with assistance from UMECS) to scale up peace education and guidance counseling programs on a national level to start the first semester in January of the 2011 school year.
27 September 2010

Ref: United Movement to End Child Soldiering (UMECS)

To Whom it May Concern:

It is a pleasure to provide this letter of reference for United Movement to End Child Soldiering (UMECS) and “UMECS Peace Education and Guidance and Counselling Program in Secondary Schools in Northern Uganda.” UMECS serves as our implementing partner for this program which represents the very core of the USAID/SPRING project’s objective “to mitigate the causes and consequences of conflict in Northern Uganda.”

In September 2009, UMECS won a highly competitive one-year grant from USAID/SPRING to pilot this program in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports. Our selection criteria included track record, capacity, organizational leadership, staff expertise, collaborations and partnerships, the strength of community, school, local and central government relationships and financial accountability.

Our decision to select UMECS among a stiff competition of candidates has been fully validated by their groundbreaking implementation of the program and strict compliance with USAID activity and financial reporting requirements. Throughout this past year, USAID officials, our staff and I conducted numerous site visits to the seven pilot program schools in four districts in Northern Uganda, interviewing principals, teachers and students, observing program activities and attending program events. UMECS has built ownership with the Government of Uganda, 88 trained teachers and more than 2,400 participating students. This project exceeds our expectations of the qualities we were looking for when we selected UMECS to pioneer this program and they are at the top of the performance list among our 30 implementing partners.

The program has changed the lives of thousands of students traumatized by the recently ended conflict in Northern Uganda and is building an environment of peace and non-violence at all seven schools. We are moved and encouraged by the depth and speed of the results. I hope and expect that with future assistance from development partners this project can continue and expand across Uganda.

I am pleased and proud to highly recommend UMECS for grant support and urge your support of this highly needed program.

Sincerely,

Jessica Huber
Director, Peace and Justice Programs