

BOSCO

BATTERY OPERATED SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

UGANDA



Northern Uganda Conflict

Northern Uganda has been trapped in an armed conflict between the LRA (Lords Resistance Army) and the Ugandan Government troops over the past 20 years. The war has displaced almost 2 million people into squalid Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps, causing massive social unrest and dependency on charity and aid for basic life necessities. This has led to a profound isolation of the displaced Acholi people as movement and communication between the IDP camps and the outside world was heavily restricted.

A peace agreement is on the horizon and a cease fire has held for more than two years, giving hope for permanent peace to the Acholi people for the first time in 20 years. Yet, the conflict has left its impact, destroying the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the vibrant Acholi people of northern Uganda. BOSCO-Uganda believes that access to communications services in rural areas can reduce the isolation of communities and improve service delivery in the fields of health, education, agriculture using innovative Web 2.0 social collaboration tools.



Vision of BOSCO

To provide Communication and Information Technology to foster social and economical development and peace building in rural communities of northern Uganda using a collaborative, web-based approach. BOSCO-Uganda provides access to the Internet and VoIP telephony connecting users to the world wide web and to an internal [Intranet] network, using low-power PCs and long-range WiFi connectivity to build a network that requires no access to the electrical grid. Moving beyond the provision of technical solutions, BOSCO will concentrate on both proven and emerging directions for ICT usage, including a Web 2.0 collaborative approach to cooperation with health centers, human rights groups, e-agriculture, and many others.

History of BOSCO

In April 2007 BOSCO was launched as a solar powered, long-range wireless computer network covering 9 locations including IDP camps in Gulu and Amuru districts of northern Uganda. Low power PCs and VoIP phones were installed in schools, health centers and parish offices, bringing Internet and Intranet connectivity to remote areas.



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www.bosco-uganda.wikispaces.com

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BOSCO Programming and Future Expansion

BOSCO is currently pursuing collaborative Web 2.0 ICT training in all network locations. We **work with experienced partners to identify key change agents**, who in turn **form user groups** and craft a constitution to guide their efforts. Collaborating from the start with local and international partners, these user groups **document their local stories, articulate local needs, and propose local solutions**, all this done in the public eye using **simple collaboration tools** (Wikispace.com, Skype, the Google suite). As they draw others into these collaborative efforts, they begin to organize their assistance to newer users, **turning traditional ICT training on its head, collaborating first**, which is IC2.OT (Information, Communication and **Collaboration** Technology, or **IC2T**) training.

Documenting their local stories [digital ethnography] **as the first steps toward creating a collaborative environment** restores proper attention to war-scourged cultural elements, enables greater cultural sensitivity from remote partners, and safeguards against the loss of cultural diversity, particularly when taking place under the watchful guidance of stable and experienced local shepherding (see: www.bosco-uganda.wikispaces.com). Pilot efforts in 7 camps are succeeding; nothing but funding keeps us from spreading this approach throughout the North of Uganda.

Low Power, Solar, and Wireless Technical Solution

BOSCO-Uganda is using technologies, especially designed for rural areas without access to the electrical grid:

- Low Power components and PCs operating on 12V DC, powered by solar panels
- Directional Wireless antennas mounted on water towers or roofs to transmit WiFi over distances of 30-50 km throughout northern Uganda
- Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) is used to avoid expensive licensing issues and simple, user-friendly operating system which is invulnerable to viruses



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