

## International aid

# This is how scouting will help children in Uganda

A new project in northern Uganda is to start 60 new scout clubs. The goal is to create security and better living conditions for 8,000 children.

By: **HELENA WANNBERG** Today at 09:19



Didas Balimanya (inset) is responsible for the project in his role as regional representative of the IOGT-NTO Movement in East Africa. Photo: Nabatanzi Teopista/UGGA, Naomi Mwampishi, Andreas Ericsson. Mounting

**The region around the West Nile** in northern Uganda is a vulnerable region, with severe poverty. For many years, the area has also received a large amount of refugees from South Sudan, which has been characterized by long-term civil wars and conflicts. This is where the scout clubs will be started, in a major investment through collaboration between the Ugandan scout organization Uganda Girl Guides Association, UGGA, and the IOGT-NTO movement. It can all be realized thanks to a grant of SEK 3.3 million from the Akelius foundation.

- People flee across the border, and 60 percent of those fleeing are children, says Johanna Davén, general secretary of the IOGT-NTO movement non-profit association, INRIF, which is responsible for the movement's international operations.

**She describes how** the large refugee camps constitute an unsafe environment for the already traumatized children, who risk being exposed to sexual abuse and human trafficking. Alcohol consumption is high among both adults and young people, and many children become involved in producing and selling alcohol. There is a lack of resources to offer good education, with a lack of trained teachers and educational materials.

3 Four out of five children drop out of school before finishing primary school. One reason could be that the children need to start working.

Not infrequently, the reason is that the parents abuse, and the children are forced to help support the family.

**Johanna Davén is happy** that the scout organization UGGA now has the opportunity to start operations in the two districts of Yumbe and Arua in northern Uganda.

- This can happen thanks to the fact that so many associations got involved in the Children of the World, says Johanna Davén and explains how it is connected:

During the 2023 Children of the World fundraiser, financier Roger Akelius promised to double the money collected by, among other things, associations and members of the IOGT-NTO movement. Organizations have since been able to apply for money for projects that focus on education, and the project "Children Education for a Bright Future" was one of those granted support. The goal is to reach 8,000 children between the ages of 10 and 17, starting on July 1.

**The new scout clubs** will give the children an opportunity for regular activities with activities, help with school materials and hygiene items. Not least, the children get to participate in a context with adult leaders who create security and community. Basically, it is about children's rights, such as the right to protection from violence and abuse, the right to education and play.

- We must work so that the children can pass school.

**Like all aid work** within the framework of the IOGT-NTO movement, it takes place in collaboration with a local organization. UGGA is an established organization in Uganda, which is now bringing its well-established methods to a new part of the country.

- UGGA knows how to run scout clubs, they know how to reach children and they know pedagogy.

This means that it is possible to get started quickly.

- They know the language and the local context. And we from the IOGT-NTO movement in Sweden know the alcohol issue - that is our expertise. We contribute with different parts.

**Johanna Davén notes** that an important part of the project is talking about alcohol, both with the children and through training for teachers and parents. Information campaigns will also be carried out in the local communities to reach as many families as possible.

- Alcohol knows no bounds, says Johanna Davén. It exists in all social classes, in all countries and the consequences are in many ways the same.

**She makes a comparison** with Sweden, where children's schooling is also affected if there is abuse in the family. But in a country where society's safety net is weaker, and alcohol policy is more or less completely absent, people are hit harder.

- In Sweden, we learned a lesson in the 19th century, that we need to have a restrictive alcohol policy. Alcohol regulation is the best export we have - it would contribute so much to development in many countries!

Precisely in Uganda, the IOGT-NTO movement also supports the organization Uganda Alcohol Policy Alliance, UAPA, which works for the country to have restrictive alcohol legislation.

**But Johanna Davén is worried** about the austerity and the government's reform agenda for Swedish aid. She describes that there is great uncertainty both among Swedish aid organizations and partners around the world, who do not know whether they can continue their work.

- Swedish development work has been so well known around the world for having a high standard. It is now at risk of being overturned, says Johanna Davén, who still hopes that the IOGT-NTO movement will be able to continue supporting its partners.

- However, we know with certainty that the project in northern Uganda will be able to be carried out, where the financing is secured with the money from the Akelius Foundation.

**Activities with the scout clubs** have support for two years.

- Considering the situation in the area, it should last for ten years, but we can really make a difference even in two years. It's a drop in the ocean, but it means a lot to every child.



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