

Louis Lakor

“We must stop children being used as weapons of war.”

Louis Lakor is helping former child soldiers in Uganda to learn valuable skills, earn a living and recover from the trauma of their pasts.

He has a very personal connection to these young people: when he was seven, he was kidnapped by rebels from the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and forced to take up arms against his own people. When they stormed his village in Gulu district of Northern Uganda, the rebels murdered his mother, father and sisters in front of him. As a child soldier, he was forced to kill many people, including his best friend who was too weak to fight for the rebels. At 11, he fled, during a Government-organised ambush on the LRA. He risked death to escape his captors but was shunned by those he asked for help because of his past and the trauma suffered by the community at the hands of the LRA.

Louis was forced to live on the streets and beg for money. His life turned around when he was taken in by a kind man called ‘Baka’ who became a father figure to him. Baka ran a workshop and gave Louis a job sweeping, before training him in mechanics. In 2014, Louis transformed the workshop into a youth training centre and fully fledged social enterprise. Here, young men and women with similar pasts to his own learn skills like welding, tailoring and mechanics. They are able to earn an income, take care of their families and rebuild their shattered lives.

Louis actively seeks out former child soldiers, bringing them to the training centre and giving them a much-needed community where they are understood and supported. As a passionate advocate for improving living conditions and increasing opportunities for Ugandan youth, Louis serves as a reminder of the resilience of his generation and of the power and importance of achieving SDG 1.