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SUCCESS STORY

Kitgum Government Offers Ray of Hope to Girls School



Students and the headmistress of Y.Y. Okot Memorial College dance at a ceremony marking the completion of campus repairs.

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October 2009 – There was a bustle of activity at Y.Y. Okot Memorial College for girls as the students and facility geared up to celebrate the completion of repairs to their campus.

After years of being on the battleground of Uganda's civil war, the school had suffered one more setback earlier this year when the roofs of classrooms and a dormitory were blown off by a violent storm. In addition, the walls of several other buildings on campus were weakened by soaking rains.

The college is the only government-funded, advanced-level boarding school for girls in Kitgum, yet the damage forced management to turn some of the classrooms into dormitories at night to provide accommodations for the girls.

The school, which is named for Acholi's first Chief of Education, who was killed by firing squad during Idi Amin's regime, serves 1,650 students and is considered one of the best-performing schools in the district. However, because resources were short, initial repairs were limited to attaching a few metal sheets over the holes in the roofs. The school had no funds for the more serious work of repairing cracks in the walls that threatened the integrity of the structures.

Recognizing that the education of hundreds of girls was at stake, the Kitgum Government acted quickly to address the problem. Local officials approached USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), requesting assistance with efforts to complete the remaining repairs to the classroom block, dormitory, and the matron's house.

At the colorful inauguration ceremony held to celebrate the completed repairs, Headmistress Gladys Oyat could not hide her emotion as she related how school management had considered sending some students home to free up space for critical classes. She said that she was grateful to the Kitgum leaders who responded to the needs of the students and their families by taking responsibility for finding the resources needed to complete the work.

“USAID is always quick in its response, so I therefore must commend them once again for taking on this big assignment and delivering quality work in record time.”

—John Ogwok, Local Council 5 Chairman

Contact: Megan Mamula, Program Manager
e-mail: mmamula@usaid.gov; telephone: (202) 712-4168
Web: www.usaid.gov – Keyword: OTI