

## Artist Statement

This exhibit is about children in Uganda, who had no hope. These forgotten youngsters struggle in refugee camps, survive in families headed by children, were abducted and turned into killers and sex slaves. The world has written them off.

The photographs explore important issues that afflict children in Africa — AIDS, war, and poverty — but with a positive twist. The children pictured in these horrendous situations joined the LEAD Uganda initiative of Concern for the Future, an indigenous Ugandan organization that puts them into the best schools and trains them to be future leaders. They are thriving.

LEAD Uganda had humble beginnings. It started with one student in 2000. The leader of an AIDS support group introduced me to Michael, a very depressed 14-year-old AIDS orphan, who was out of school. I paid Michael's school fees. As more students joined, I founded the Stephen Shames Foundation to raise money.

In a few short years, the Stephen Shames Foundation has helped LEAD Uganda, grow into a successful educational program. LEAD Uganda has transformed the lives of 80 youngsters and shown an educational initiative to help African children works.

This leadership program for bright, motivated AIDS orphans, child soldiers, and young people in refugee camps is unequalled anywhere in the world. Half of LEAD Uganda's high school students attend Uganda's ten best schools.

The photographs in this exhibit will serve as a vehicle to help the children of Africa.

