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## 2010-06-14: Making peace, one child at a time

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## Making peace, one child at a time



Sophomore Kijana Rose completed a co-op at two schools in Gulu, Uganda. Photo by Fizzah Razza.

**June 14, 2010**

Some 150 sixth and seventh-graders packed a tiny classroom on the outskirts of Gulu, Uganda, a war-ravaged country whose children have remained at the center of conflict for more than two decades. Kids raised hands, drew pictures, voiced opinions, all of them eager to learn.

Northeastern sophomore Kijana Rose, who completed a co-op at two schools in the northern Ugandan town, couldn't have been more inspired by her young students.

After returning to campus from her experiential learning opportunity in May, she expressed interest in a career as a teacher and a social worker in one of Africa's international post-conflict zones.

"It was the most amazing experience," said Rose, a **human services** and **international affairs** combined major. "One student came right out of the Congo--he might have witnessed his family die--and had such a willingness to learn."

Rose connected with Insight Collaborative's Peace Education Project to get the position with the schools, Police Primary and Paicho Primary. The nonprofit organization is dedicated to resolving conflicts and improving relationships around the world through conflict management education.

Rose trained Ugandan instructors to teach Insight Collaborative's curriculum, which includes units on conflict resolution, peace building and the history of genocide, with a focus on the Holocaust.

She also had the opportunity to help lead several in-class discussions and exercises on personal identity and the importance of community, which gave students a chance to learn a little bit more about themselves and their peers.

"A lot of these kids have grown up in a war that's been going on for 26 years," she said. "It's all they've known. They're not often asked. 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'"

"We tried to open the door for them, to allow them to focus on themselves," she added.

By the end of her co-op, children were more accepting of each other and better behaved, she said. If a student acted out, another would be sure to refer to a classroom contract created by the students that included a list of do's and don'ts.

Rose's students weren't the only ones to experience a transformation. She did, too.

Living in a country where 12-year-old security guards carry assault rifles changed Rose's perspective on the world.

"There will never be one quick solution to save the world," she said, "but being in Gulu opened my eyes to so many new possibilities, all of which include working with children."

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