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**UGANDAN CHILDREN PROMOTE MANIFESTO TO FIGHT PROBLEMS LIKE:
40 CHILDREN BORN WITH HIV EVERY DAY, ONE IN TWO ARE MALNOURISHED**

Ugandan children are calling on election candidates to fight child poverty, end child exploitation and stop the war in Northern Uganda, according to Save the Children New Zealand Executive Director, John Bowis.

Ugandan elections are taking place on February 23. Save the Children is calling on the candidates to pledge support for a Children's Manifesto and address the huge problems they face. The Children's Manifesto has been developed by Ugandan children, with support from Save the Children.

"Save the Children in Uganda (SCiU) is deeply concerned that in Uganda:

- * 2 million Ugandan children under the age of 6 live below the poverty line,
- * Almost 2 million children die each year before reaching their first birthday,
- * The conflict with the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) has led to the displacement of 2 million people, most of whom live in appalling conditions in Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps,
- * Up to 40,000 children leave their camps every evening to 'commute' to the relative safety of town centres,
- * 2.5 million children are engaged in some of the worst forms of labour,
- * 40 children are born each day with HIV, the virus that causes AIDs,
- * Half of the children are malnourished, and
- * Less than half of children aged between 6-14 complete primary school.

"The outlook for Ugandan children is depressing, even though the nation's income has grown since independence 44 years ago. The Children's Manifesto contains a list of actions that political parties should support to show they are committed to giving children a better and more secure future.

"Political parties must take responsibility for providing opportunity for tomorrow's voters, not just today's. That is why we are calling on the election candidates to get behind the manifesto and put children first in the future," John Bowis said.

The Manifesto, produced by the Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Children (UPFC) with the support of Save the Children in Uganda, calls for the future government to:

- * Fight HIV/AIDS and support orphaned children,
- * combat child abuse and neglect in all forms, including sexual abuse,
- * Fight Child Poverty,
- * Increase expenditure on education to 5 per cent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product),
- * Make universal primary education (UPE) completely free and compulsory,
- * End the war in Northern Uganda and implement a well-resourced recovery programme,
- * Represent the views and interests of children in policy decisions,
- * Outlaw child labour and child exploitation in all its forms, and
- * Eradicate the phenomenon of child soldiers.

"It is heartening to Save the Children that children are actively lobbying for an improvement in their circumstances through an end to child poverty, exploitation and war," John Bowis said.

Save the Children New Zealand is supporting an Emergency and Disaster Relief project on emergency education in Uganda.

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Notes to Editor

- * Save the Children has worked in Uganda since 1959.
- * In Uganda, Save the Children works with children affected by Armed Conflict and Disaster, children affected by HIV/AIDs, and provides access to education and health services. Other focuses include supporting children who come into contact or conflict with the law, improving food security and working to prevent early pregnancy.
- * Places where we work include Gulu, Kasese, Bundibugyo, Kumi, Karamoja and Iganga.
- * The Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Children is a non-partisan group, initiated during the 7th Uganda Parliament and consisting of more than 60 MPs from all political parties.
- * Despite the fact that their membership and party affiliations differ, the forum shares the same belief - a strong conviction that MPs as the elected representatives of the people are obliged to protect the interests of not only those who vote them to power, but those of the voiceless children who represent 56 per cent of their constituency.
- * Members of the Forum have a responsibility to work together as MPs to enhance children's rights by rising above petty quarrels and simple political party tactics.