

# THE DAILY

## Working to Empower fosters community-based change in developing countries

[February 21, 2007](#)

By [Celia Hunko](#)

If a young boy's mother dies of AIDS in North Uganda, he will no longer be able to attend school because other students will mock him, perhaps even throw rocks at him.



Courtney Christine Harris

*From left, students of Swahili Lucio, an Italian managing a hospital in Tanzania, Christine Harris and Narooma from Scotland. They are taught by Abraham, a native Tanzanian on right.*

Working to Empower online: [www.workingtoempower.org](http://www.workingtoempower.org)

This is one problem Working to Empower (WTE) focuses on alleviating in other countries, said WTE founder Logan Cochrane.

WTE is a non-profit and non-governmental organization working to empower sustainable, community-based change.

“Our focus is on HIV/AIDS education, but we are also working with negative stigma and discrimination,” Cochrane said.

Christine Harris, a 2005 UW graduate, is a volunteer for WTE and is currently spending four months in Uganda to work with the people there.

Focused mainly on HIV/AIDS education, WTE works in additional areas to counteract the negative effects felt within society, according to the WTE Web site.

“Working to Empower is really unique in that it is a youth (college-age) led organization that encourages the participation of youth people,” Harris said.

When WTE representatives travel anywhere, there is always an invitation. WTE teams up with local organizations and works together to accomplish their goals.

“Any change needs to originate from local citizens,” Cochrane said.

WTE works with refugee camps housing people who have been forced to leave their homes.

“When we get to a camp, we start with a seminar of 50 people from within the camp,” Cochrane said. “From there we create a group of five peer educators. With the educators, we create the community programs. They will tell us what they have done and what has worked, what hasn’t ... then we will tell them what has worked for us and what we think will be a good approach for their situation.”

Harris will be working with one other person in training the peer educators in Uganda.

“The focus is on sustainability,” Cochrane said. “We want the efforts and progress to continue once we leave.”

In addition to HIV/AIDS education, poverty is a huge issue as well.

“In many cases, [HIV/AIDS] education is not enough,” Cochrane said. “We also have created income generating projects, and we have projects helping orphaned children go to school.”

One such project is the Emebet Education Program (EEP), which is helping young orphans, like the young boy unable to attend school.

The option to attend school is not currently available to many of these children.

“There are no secondary schools at all in the camps,” said Cochrane. “We are helping them go to boarding schools in the city.”

People can volunteer in many ways: volunteers help run the Web site, work on the newsletter, distribute resources and spend time in the camps.

“Resources are distributed in 16 languages, so if you know a language you can definitely help,” said Cochrane.

“The best way to get involved would be to go to the Web site and have a look around,” Harris said. “WTE would be a great organization for University of Washington students to get involved in.”

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