

USAID/OTI Uganda Field Report

July - September 2008

Program Description

As part of the U.S. Mission to Uganda's assistance effort in northern Uganda, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched the Northern Uganda Transition Initiative (NUTI) in June 2008 to assist with recovery and development activities in war-affected northern Uganda. The negotiations between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda (GoU) that began in 2006 and the improved security situation in northern Uganda are providing hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) across northern Uganda with a chance to return to their homes and communities. The progress has led to a new focus by both the GoU and the international community to provide a path to post-conflict development. Currently, a window of opportunity exists for OTI to conduct activities aimed at supporting the region's transition to peace and recovery.

The overall goal of USAID/Uganda's OTI program is to encourage and support the voluntary return of displaced northern Ugandans by increasing their confidence in the government and in the ongoing transition process. To support this goal, OTI will focus on the following objectives:

- Enhance the capacity of the Ugandan media, particularly in northern Uganda, to research, inform, and report on issues relevant to peace, recovery, and development; and
- Increase the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of government through the delivery of targeted, strategic interventions.

Country Situation

Stalling Peace Process – The transition to peace in northern Uganda has been moving forward, as evidenced by significant rates of return among IDPs in certain areas, although rates vary between regions. As of September 2008, two-thirds of approximately 1.2 million IDPs have left the camps for transit sites or their villages (*OCHA Uganda Humanitarian Situation Report: 1–30 Sept. 2008*). It is worth noting that the distinction between returnees and IDPs can be difficult to make, owing to high levels of mobility between camps, villages, and transit sites. People are starting to cultivate their second consecutive harvest since the LRA's last period of activity in Uganda, and northern Uganda is entering into an almost unprecedented third year of stability.

However, before peace can be fully realized, Uganda must overcome a number of serious challenges. The peace process between the LRA and GoU has stalled, with LRA leader Joseph Kony failing to appear in the assembly area of Ri-Kwamba to sign the Final Peace Agreement. In addition, the Government of Southern Sudan, which had been moderating the peace talks, has walked away from the negotiations, and the U.N. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan, Joaquim Chissano, has said he no longer believes a peace deal will be signed.

Local Challenges as IDPs Return Home – On the local front, people returning to their villages in northern Uganda are faced with significant challenges. The GoU has been unable to keep up with the high rates of return and extend its reach into the villages; therefore, IDPs face the challenge of returning to villages with few, if any, public services. The GoU Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for the 40 districts of northern Uganda – sold to the population and donor community as the “peace dividend” – is also stalled. The GoU has been unable to agree on an implementation schedule for the PRDP and has not identified the additional funds necessary to carry out its successful implementation.

Regional LRA Activity – While the LRA has not been active in northern Uganda for two years, it remains active in northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and in Southern Sudan. Reports of violent attacks on villages, as well as the abduction of more than 100 children, indicate that the LRA remains a source of instability in the region. In September alone, approximately 75,000 people were displaced from their villages in DRC as a consequence of LRA attacks.

OTI Highlights

A. Narrative Summary

During the quarter, OTI began to shift its energies away from start-up activities to focus on efforts that encourage and support the voluntary return of displaced northern Ugandans to their homes and communities. As of September 2008, OTI has approved 14 small grants, totaling \$607,267, for implementation in four districts – Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum, and Pader.

OTI's partner, Casals & Associates, has developed and is implementing grants that employ a variety of approaches to support the program goal and objectives. Major areas of activity include rehabilitation of government buildings and infrastructure, government outreach, and public information interventions. Grants are providing support for radio programming, peace and reconciliation efforts, agricultural production activities, and IDP camp closures. Most of the grants awarded during the quarter went to local government bodies at the district and sub-county levels. Local governments are playing critical roles in the implementation and monitoring of grant activities.

B. Grants Activity Summary

Sector	Grants Cleared (July–Sept 2008)	Estimated Budget for Grants Cleared (July–Sept 2008)
Agriculture	1	\$85,175
Conflict Mitigation	2	\$82,110
Education	2	\$170,324
Health	1	\$18,227
Infrastructure	2	\$104,840
Institution Strengthening	1	\$28,573
Media	2	\$38,392
Reconciliation	3	\$79,625
Total	14	\$607,267

C. Indicators of Success

In a relatively short period of time, the OTI/Uganda program has gained the respect of many citizens and civic leaders who have been impressed by the tangible results the program has brought to peace and transition efforts in northern Uganda.

Re-targeting/Flexibility – OTI/Uganda has been able to learn from ongoing activities, address the challenges that arise, and make changes to program activities accordingly. Based on lessons learned early on, OTI has been able to increase local ownership of projects by targeting interventions so the community drives the process. While there have been times when this strategy has made project implementation more time consuming, OTI has used these occasions to glean valuable lessons that help the program better target activities. For example, OTI found that working with officials at the sub-county levels of government (Local Council-3 (LC3) level and below) results in greater participation and a heightened sense of local government empowerment.

Speed – OTI and its implementing partner have developed the capacity to respond quickly to new



opportunities and emerging priorities. In September, the program developed and implemented a media-support grant – taking it from idea through execution in one week. Through this grant, a first-time grantee worked with OTI to convene a meeting that brought journalists and management staff from radio stations throughout northern Uganda to a discussion and brainstorming session on the state of the media in northern Uganda and on how to improve the quality of reporting.

OTI Deputy Country Representative John Gattorn presents agriculture equipment to Stephen Ogik, director of the Lalogi Sub-County Farmer's Forum. The equipment, supplied by OTI, will help the government to support the farming needs of the returning IDP population in Gulu District

Resource Leveraging – During the quarter, OTI program staff actively participated in monthly coordination forums between donors and the Gulu and Amuru District governments. Staff attended District Disaster Management Committee meetings, security meetings, and important sector meetings. Close coordination with these parties has allowed the program to develop grants that leverage additional funding. For example, OTI awarded a grant to the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that will allow it to continue and expand a radio program that broadcasts important information to IDPs. OTI resources will fund the program on stations covering Gulu and Amuru, while UNHCR's resources will be used to expand the broadcasts to Kitgum and Pader, areas where large numbers of IDPs remain in camps. By leveraging its support, OTI extended the broadcasts' reach and brought valuable information to IDPs trying to make informed decisions about returning to their homes.

Program Appraisal

Initial program implementation is strong and on its way to meeting the objectives established for the program. OTI efforts to increase the visibility of and confidence in all levels of government, particularly local government, remain important given the current realities in northern Uganda. As more people begin to return to their homes and communities, they must be reassured of the government's ability to provide basic and necessary services. Through its programming thus far, OTI has determined that targeting the sub-county level of government provides the greatest benefits to northern Ugandans, as sub-county offices are often underfunded, yet leaders at this level tend to be willing and motivated to work to improve conditions in their communities.

OTI's assessment of its overall goal and objectives indicates that the Ugandan media should remain a priority in the coming year. Therefore, over the coming months, additional focus will be given to the objective of enhancing the capacity of the Ugandan media to research, inform, and report on issues relevant to peace, recovery, and development.

In addition, increasing numbers of returning IDPs combined with generally deficient levels of infrastructure and development in Kitgum and Pader point toward a need for expanded OTI involvement in these districts. Accordingly, the program will target activities to support LC3-level governments and media outlets in Kitgum and Pader in early 2009.

Next Steps/Immediate Priorities

Priorities for the next three months include the following:

- Selecting two sub-counties in northern Uganda with high rates of IDP returns to receive five or six small grants. By concentrating small grants in these targeted sub-counties, OTI intends to maximize impact and encourage IDPs to return.
- Focusing on transitional justice activities in northern Uganda and at the national level. OTI will work with partners and local leaders to determine the types of activities appropriate for the traditional Acholi community in northern Uganda.
- Continuing grant-making activities in Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum, and Pader, with a focus on expanding programming in Kitgum and Pader.