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NUTI Northern Uganda Transition Initiative

Quarterly Report January - March 2009

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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:

- Increase access to information on peace, recovery and development issues in Northern Uganda through support to the media and strategic communication activities
- Increase the visibility of and confidence in all levels of government through the delivery of targeted strategic interventions.
- Support Truth and Reconciliation Processes

USAID's total obligation to NUTI stands at \$7,991,051

COUNTRY SITUATION

Security Situation:

The security situation remains calm. The army Ugandan army officials describe the 'Operation Lightning Thunder' launched by a joint military force by the Governments of Uganda (GoU), Southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as largely successful after the UPDF withdrawal from Garamba. However, there remains concern among northerners that Kony may return and continue to commit atrocities. The UN Special Envoy and former President of Mozambique, Joachim Chissano has stated that for there to be any return to peace process of any kind Kony must call him "directly and often". Apparently the idea of peace negotiation no longer holds and as a result key stakeholders including judges, lawyers, traditional and religious leaders, government officials, donors, and other members of civil society organizations continue to engage in discussions about how to establish the local mechanisms that will deal with LRA fighters. It is hoped that the special war crimes division of the high court will be granted complementarity by the ICC and be given jurisdiction over the indictments against senior LRA commanders. The draft war crimes bill has been presented to parliament, however debate regarding this legislation will be vigorous and could take a while. There are also discussions regarding the need for a national reconciliation bill. There are still questions, however, about the capacity of the local courts and traditional leaders to handle such cases fairly and effectively. Financing for transitional justice implementation is also unclear as it is not included in the regular government budget framework.

Political highlights:

a) The cabinet reshuffle

In January 2009, the President reshuffled his cabinet, selecting only 2 Cabinet Ministers and 2 State Ministers from the Acholi sub region. Individuals from the western region, where the President comes from, now hold 11 Cabinet Minister and 14 State Minister positions. Many of the people in the northern Uganda have interpreted the reshuffle to be a sign of continued marginalization by the central government.

b) NRM Preliminaries and Local council elections and by-elections

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) party has set April 2, 2009 as polling day for the party primaries for the local council seats, in sub-counties, town councils, wards and parishes. The Electoral Commission recently declared the local council positions vacant and set April 7 and 8 as dates for nomination of candidates for the 1,468 vacancies in 78 districts. The electoral commission announced May 21, 2009 as the date for the national local council by-elections across the country

c) The discovery of oil in Amuru district

In the January monthly report there was mention of discovery of oil fields extending into northern Uganda in Amuru district, a discovery which sparked speculation and debate about how royalties will be shared. The oil discovery has also resulted in increased tension over land. Speculation continues to intensify, particularly since the oil field has been gazetted as no-go area and is heavily guarded by the presidential guard brigade and other private security personnel. This has raised a lot of concern among the local communities and politicians around the oil field who feel excluded from participating in the oil exploration processes.

d) Continued PRDP delay

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Full PRDP implementation has been postponed from fiscal year 2008-2009 to fiscal year 2009-2010, due to the lack of coordination between the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the Prime Minister.

OTI HIGHLIGHTS

The most significant events of this quarter were NUTI's expansion to Kitgum district, a new targeting strategy focusing on additional sub-counties in Amuru district, and the periodic program review exercise.

Expansion to Kitgum district

During this quarter NUTI expanded to Kitgum. Since January 2009 NUTI has developed and received clearance for eight grants of which two have been completed. In Kitgum NUTI is developing grants targeting district-level interventions, as well as grants focused on the Agoro sub-county. Four of the eight cleared grants are supporting activities in Agoro. Additional details are provided below.

Selection of new Sub-counties

In February NUTI conducted its second program review. The NUTI team decided to maintain the approach developed following the October program visioning session of targeting activities at the sub-county level, complimented by critical interventions at the district level. Following the February program review, NUTI expanded to three new sub-counties: Agoro in Kitgum District and Purongo and Pabbo in Amuru District. The selection of sub-counties in Amuru and Kitgum districts was based on the following considerations:

- **Agoro Sub-county in Kitgum District:** Agoro sub-county is strategically located near the southern Sudanese border. Agoro has a very active sub-county chairman and local councilors. The sub-county has developed a comprehensive sub-county development plan and a list of unfunded priorities requiring support. Per the Uganda Bureau of Statistics population projections for 2008, Agoro is expected to have the fourth highest population of Kitgum's 20 sub-counties. Returns of formerly displaced to Agoro have been steady, making assistance to the government in rehabilitating basic social service infrastructure is key to supporting and accelerating the return process.

Agoro also has great economic potential as it is considered Kitgum's most productive agricultural area. Its unique climatic and hydrological conditions are due to two mountain chains in the sub-county, which result in increased rainfall and year-round mountain springs and other water sources. The British colonial government capitalized on Agoro's great agricultural potential and built a large irrigation scheme with the potential to irrigate over 1000 acres of highly productive land. Currently the irrigation system is in complete disrepair and its renovation is a priority of the sub-county, district, and central government. The Farmer's Forum, a National Agricultural Advisory Services structure, is functional and very active in the sub-county. Cross-border trade is increasing and Agoro hosts the largest monthly cattle in the district. Pastoralists cross into Uganda from South Sudan with thousands of cattle for the market.

Other USAID initiatives are also active in Agoro, which makes this an ideal sub-county for NUTI. By working closely with other USAID partners, NUTI can jump start initiatives that longer-term development projects can sustain and build upon. For example the International Rescue Committee, with funding from USAID's SPRING project, recently received an agriculture grant to build crop storage facilities in Agoro. Another USAID program, LEAD (Livelihoods and Enterprises for Agricultural Development), is also targeting its support toward farmers' groups in Agoro.

- **Purongo Sub-county in Amuru District:** Politically, Purongo is one of the often neglected sub-counties. People there feel cut off due to the distance from the Amuru District Offices as well as Gulu town. After the discovery of oil in the area, the sub-county officials complain of being totally left out of the on-going oil exploration activities. NUTI has two grants there: one of these is with the Youth Education Pack (YEP) Centers, vocational training centers targeting war-affected youth, established by the Norwegian Refugee Council. The YEP centers will produce furniture to outfit several buildings rehabilitated by the NUTI program also in Purongo. The other grant will work with NUMAT, another USAID program which has built the laboratory for the health facility. The sub-county chief has just returned from training in public administration

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and is eager to apply his new skills. Purongo is also strategic from a program monitoring perspective - Alero sub-county, where NUTI has a number of ongoing projects is on the way to Purongo. This will facilitate monitoring projects.

- **Pabbo Sub-county in Amuru District:** Pabbo has one of the highest IDP return rates and hosts one of the oldest and largest IDP camps. Due to this high population pressure, most of the sub-county resources have been depleted. NUTI has undertaken two grants there, one to the YEP center and another to record radio programs there as part of the IDP information campaigns. USAID's SPRING project has provided training in conflict sensitivity and livelihoods in Pabbo. Save the Children is also present and active in peace building activities there.

Grants Activity Summary

	January 1-March 31 2009	Total
# of Grants Cleared	28	62
Total \$ of Grants Cleared	\$1,166,264	\$ 2,681,986

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Events: the handover ceremonies of Patira School and Purongo sub-county administration office. NUTI rehabilitated classrooms, teacher's houses and latrines of Patira P7 School. On March 6, 2009 NUTI inaugurated the Patira P 7 School to Amuru District local Government in a colorful ceremony that was officiated by the Amuru District Chairman and attended by the OTI Deputy Country Representative, John Gattorn, and other district officials. Also in attendance was the Special Advisor to the President, on northern Uganda Mr. Todwong Richard. On February 9, 2009, NUTI again handed over the rehabilitated Purongo sub-county administration offices to the sub-county officials. The ceremony was attended both by the USAID officials and Amuru district local government. OTI's Acting Africa Team Leader, John Rigby officially inaugurated the building. Other important events in this quarter included: the music dance and drama competition that attracted over 1300 participants from all 11 sub-counties in Gulu District; and the soccer tournament whereby 12 football teams benefited directly from the activity.

Campaigns: NUTI provided support to the 'Invisible Children' for a campaign entitled "The Rescue of Joseph Kony's Child Soldiers" which took place Gulu. The two-day event was attended by various dignitaries including the Ambassadors of DR Congo and France, members of Parliament, Ugandan Ministers for Environment and Youth and Children Affairs. Among other dignitaries who attended was the USAD Northern Uganda Advisor, Dana Stinson.

Surveys:

- The media SWOT analysis has been finalized and the results were recently disseminated to the media groups. Following the recommendations of the review, NUTI is in the process of procuring radio equipment for three radio stations: Radio King, Kitti Fm and and Luo FM.
- The Steadman Group shared the perceptions and media and information survey results during the program review meeting. The results assisted NUTI to analyze and assess the strategic direction the program and influenced decisions about how the program should approach expansion into new areas. Steadman has submitted a draft report and is awaiting review and feedback from the NUTI team. Five key questions have been analyzed for each sub-county and will be used as benchmarks for future sub-county cluster evaluations.
- The first client's satisfaction survey was finalized in this quarter and the results indicated that stakeholders rated NUTI as an excellent program. The stakeholders emphasized key strengths of NUTI as: having a strong participatory component characterized by a bottom up approach; ability to deliver promises; flexible funding; maintaining regular follow up and monitoring of projects and effective communication with the grantees; tangible and relevant infrastructure support ; working within the decentralized framework and coordination with partners. The survey highlighted the need for high quality infrastructure and demands that contractors respect the communities in which they are working. The findings from this survey are attached as an Annex to this report.

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- NUTI's Information, Monitoring & Evaluation Manager led a '3-months-after evaluation' on the HEP E campaign. The evaluation resulted in some of the following recommendations: do not wait for an outbreak to begin sensitizing the community; use radio campaigns to reach a widespread audience; include local leaders in the trainings. A more complete list of evaluation results is included in the database grant notes.

Speed: As in the previous quarter, NUTI continues to move at a responsible speed to implement grants. NUTI has recruited additional staff who have embarked on their duties to address the increasing workload. These include three new staff who will be based in Kitgum and will include one Program Development Officer, one Procurement Associate and one Program Development Associate. In addition to that NUTI is in the process of recruiting more engineers monitor on infrastructure rehabilitation grants, and media consultants to build the capacity of radio stations. The NUTI momentum in grants development and implementation has also accelerated. During this quarter alone, 28 grants were cleared. The burn rate for this quarter has been \$388,755 per month and the average monthly grants clearance was nine compared to seven for the last quarter.

Re-targeting/Flexibility: Retargeting and flexibility were envisaged in the expansion to the new district (Kitgum) and the new sub-counties. In Kitgum district where the consultation work and grant development activities have been ongoing since January 2009, eight grants are in various stages of development and implementation. Upon short notice NUTI also supported the relocation of 14 schools in Gulu and Amuru districts to their original sites. Toward the end of March, NUTI was also requested to support the annual sports competition on short notice by Gulu District. The district won a bid to host the national annual sport competition events. However, Gulu district local government did not have sufficient funds to host the event and NUTI was called in at short notice to provide financial support. NUTI facilitated in financing some of the logistical requirements such as banners, the public address system, transportation, food and beverages and radio announcements. This event which will run for a week brings together 75 competing teams with each team comprising of an average of 60 participants. It is anticipated that 64 districts and 11 municipalities will participate.

Resource Leveraging: NUTI is working and coordinating closely with the local governments and a number of international organizations, UN agencies, donors, NGOs, and US government-funded programs. NUTI and the US Embassy are jointly developing a peace journalism training initiative in June 2009. NUTI will support trainings in northern Uganda and the Embassy will cover the costs of a similar training in Kampala. NUTI continues to work with the Norwegian Refugee Council-supported Youth Education Packs to make furniture for public buildings, including the sub-county offices. USAID Uganda has encouraged collaboration among its implementing partners for better results and as well avoiding duplication of efforts. NUTI is providing small in-kind grants to pave way for long-term sustainable USAID supported programs. The following are some of the major areas of collaborations between NUTI and other USAID supported projects:

- The Livelihoods and Enterprises for Agricultural Development (LEAD) program, will build on the NUTI-constructed stores and supply of farm equipment in Lalogi sub-county. NUTI is holding discussion with LEAD to incorporate Lalogi sub-county in their operational areas.
- Internews handed over its radio production facility to NUTI; there are ongoing discussions about where to host this facility. NUTI is working with several radio stations trained by Internews to build their capacity to disseminate information on Peace, Recovery and Development in Northern Uganda.
- In addition to providing a baseline for NUTI, the media and perception survey conducted by Steadman will also be used by other USAID supported programs such as NUDEIL and LEAD.
- NUTI has rehabilitated classrooms, staffrooms, latrine stances, teacher houses, kitchen and storage spaces in Patira Primary School and UNITY/REPLICA has trained the teachers and provided them with curriculum. At the same time, NUTI is also collaborating with UNITY/REPLICA in planning Amuru District Education Week scheduled for April 6-9, 2009.
- NUTI is collaborating with Linkages to provide Curriculum and Production of Statutory instruments for Gulu Local Government Officials to enhance effective legislature and accountability.
- NUTI is providing technical assistance to the District Engineers Office which could provide initial support for NUDEIL.

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- NUTI is rehabilitating the Langol HC II staff houses while NUMAT has rehabilitated the laboratory for the health facility.

Policy Leveraging: NUTI's approach of working closely with the local government at both the district and sub-county level to identify potential projects for grants and its capacity to quickly implement these grants has generated both interest among donors and support from the local governments. Senior district and sub-county officials are putting pressure on other donor governments to use a similar approach of consultation and fast and flexible implementation to respond to the evolving and fluid context.

As mentioned above, NUTI has responded positively to the USAID Mission's directive for greater collaboration and coordination among the USAID-funded programs. NUTI is also watching cautiously and looking forward to the funding coming online for the implementation of the PRDP beginning in July this year and commencement of new programs targeting the Acholi sub region including NUSAF II. NUTI will continue to work to coordinate and build partnerships with new and existing programs to maximize the impact and increase the chances of sustainability of the small grants.

PROGRAM APPRAISAL

Periodic Program Review

On February 5, 2009 the NUTI program held a periodic program review that focused on the political situation, updated program information, and the outcomes of ongoing small grants activity in order to ascertain whether the program continues to be relevant to the transition underway in northern Uganda. The day-long session included the following items:

- Review of the preliminary findings from the perceptions and media survey that was conducted by the Steadman Group. This focused on the level of media consumption and the perceptions of government by the local population. Generally speaking the survey results were well presented and very interesting. It was agreed that NUTI will be working more closely with Steadman to analyze this information in the appropriate way for monitoring and evaluation, as well as mapping.
- Presentation of the SWOT analysis of 10 major radio stations in the north. This analysis assessed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to Information/Communications Technology of infrastructure, equipment, training, content, programming and management for the selected radio stations. This was an excellent opportunity to review the needs and the requirements of the radio stations with which NUTI proposes to work.
- Review of the M&E strategy. It was concluded that the M&E strategy is robust but not overly strenuous on NUTI staff.
- The progress of PRDP implementation was reviewed. NUTI will await further progress towards the end of March 2009, which will determine our involvement with PRDP rollout.
- After working for several months on media issues, and reviewing the media SWOT analysis and assessment, it was agreed that the first NUTI objective was too broad and was not sufficiently "transitional". Hence the wording of objective one was changed to: "Increase access to information on peace, recovery and development issues in LRA affected areas through support to the media and strategic communication activities". This means that there will be additional emphasis and program adaptations in the design of the media grants to address the modifications. The new media objective allows NUTI to work not only with radio, but also in strategic communications and other creative mechanisms to disseminate programming on peace and recovery. This also means the six months media strategy developed at the beginning of the project will soon be updated. The Program Development Officer – Media & Communications is developing a new strategy to address this need which will be circulated soon.
- NUTI also reviewed the second program objective, seeking to ascertain whether the wording and the scope of the objective was accurate. The team agreed that NUTI will retain the second objective as it is, with the possible exception of eliminating the word "confidence" once the final results from the Steadman poll are received since preliminary results of NUTI's survey seems to suggest northern Ugandan residents do have a degree of confidence in their local officials.
- NUTI will continue the sub-county focus approach and in doing so will select two new sub-counties in Amuru and one sub-county in Kitgum.

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- Idle youth are potential spoilers to lasting peace in the region. NUTI will continue to look for ways to engage youth in activities across the program.

NUTI's Approach

NUTI continues to maintain a participatory, grassroots approach of working with communities and local leaders to identify priorities for support. For instance in the recent consultations in Agoro, Pabo and Purongo sub-counties where the program has been expanded, the grants developed there were based on the priorities identified by the communities which were also reflected in the respective sub-county development plans. In Purongo, 142 participants attended in order to defend their plans and most of them were conversant on their priorities. NUTI continues to fulfill its commitments as promised. This approach has earned NUTI respect and trust from the stakeholders to an extent that some of the stakeholders recommended that NUTI should share its approach with other donors as was reflected in the recent clients' satisfaction survey.

NUTI has registered tremendous achievements in respect to its objectives. The section on the indicators of success above outlines some of the major events, campaigns and surveys that demonstrate some of the achievements NUTI has made which cannot be repeated here.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Despite its progress NUTI continues to encounter several challenges. Some of the challenges discussed in the previous quarter such as lack of local capacity, demand for allowances by local government officials, conflicts and tension over land tenure remain pertinent, and are still beyond NUTI's control. Emerging challenges include:

- The increasing need for disbursement of cash for payments instead of checks. Some of the areas where NUTI is operating are very remote and hence NUTI cannot transact business through checks but rather have to pay the cash. This has posed the risk of theft and robbery of the money in transit. NUTI is in the process of hiring a finance assistant to be in charge of this activity.
- During this quarter two key staff, NUTI's STTA ICT Consultant and one STTA engineer, left the program. The loss of staff had a negative impact on NUTI's capacity to adequately monitor rehabilitation projects underway and get new rehabilitation projects up and running as well as the general smooth running of the office. Plans are underway to fill both positions
- Building confidence in the local government is challenging, as the needs in returnee communities far exceed the capacity and resources available. NUTI has succeeded in assisting the local government to deliver highly-visible infrastructure projects in response to some of the community demands. These interventions help the local government demonstrate that even with limited capacity and resources, they are trying to be responsive to their constituents.
- NUTI faces challenges in implementing rehabilitation projects. The quality of work produced by some construction contractors often does not meet NUTI's expectations. Some contractors do not cooperate with the community and have even failed to pay for the food and building materials such as bricks obtained from the community. NUTI is putting new measures in place to improve on quality of the construction work. This will include hiring additional STTA engineers to regularly supervise the construction work at the sites. Contractors who produce shoddy work will be penalized based on specific terms included in future contracts. The new contract agreements will include stronger terms relating to the contractors' code of conduct towards the communities they are serving. NUTI is also planning a contractors and bidders conference to review the program's experience to date and work with current and potential contractors on overcoming these challenges.

STAFF MOVEMENT

- Jan 4, 2009 - Amanda Willett, NUTI Chief of Party, returned to Uganda from the US.
- Jan 19-21, 2009 - Joel Hirst, OTI Country Representative, John Gattorn, OTI Deputy Country Representative, Amanda Willett, Moses Oguti, Program Development Officer for Media & Communications, and John Opio and Charles Onen, Drivers visited Kitgum District.
- Jan 23 – Feb 10, 2009 - Abigail Griffith, Program Coordinator, arrived in Uganda from the US.
- Jan 25 – Feb 14, 2009 - Megan Mamula, Program Manager and COTR, arrived in Uganda and travelled to Gulu.

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- Jan 29-30, 2009 - John Gattorn, Brenda Auma, Database Coordinator, Alimo Florence, Program Assistant, and John Opio visited Kitgum.
- Jan 29-31, 2009 Joel Hirst returned to Gulu from Kampala.
- Feb 2-9, 2009 - John Rigby, Acting OTI Africa Team Leader, traveled to Gulu.
- Feb 3-6, 2009 - Debbie Grieser, Deputy USAID Mission Director, travelled to Gulu.
- Feb 7-8, 2009 - Moses Oguti and Xavier Nsabagasani, Information Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, travelled to Kampala.
- Feb 9-11, 2009 - Amanda Willett traveled to Kampala for debrief meeting with OTI/Washington staff.
- Feb 9-11, 2009 - Lourdes Sanchez, NUTI Operations Manager, arrived in Kampala and traveled to Gulu.
- Feb 12-13, 2009 - John Gattorn Brenda Auma Florence Alimo, Charles Onen, and John Opio travelled to Kitgum.
- Feb 15-18, 2009 - Patricia Cingtho, Program Development Officer, travelled to Kampala to attend a USAID-sponsored workshop on Transitional Justice.
- Feb 17-20, 2009 - Brenda Auma and Florence Alimo travelled to Kitgum.
- Feb 18 – March 4, 2009 - Amanda Willett traveled to Kampala to attend two days of the USAID-sponsored workshop on Transitional Justice and then departed for the US.
- Feb 20 – March 3, 2009 - Enrique Rivera, Casals Financial Analyst, traveled to Gulu.
- Feb 25 – March 1, 2009 - John Gattorn traveled to Addis Ababa.
- March 3-4, 2009 - Brenda Auma travelled to Kitgum.
- March 11-12, 2009 - Amanda Willet travelled to Kitgum.
- March 13-15, 2009 - Amanda Willet travelled to Kampala
- March 13-18, 2009 - Lourdes Sanchez travelled to Kampala.
- March 23-27, 2009 - Joel Hirst travelled to Gulu.

NEXT STEPS/IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

In general, NUTI will continue to work to develop new grants and ensure that all the grants that have been cleared are effectively implemented and adequately monitored. In the next quarter, the following will be key areas of focus to improve implementation:

- NUTI will expand the office premises to accommodate the increasing number of staff. Plans are under way to open a new staff office in Kitgum. There are also plans to construct a grass thatched hut for the Gulu office in order to increase on the office space. NUTI will also be using the Internews house as an extension for the Gulu office which will house STTA consultants.
- NUTI intends to carry out more “3-months-after” evaluations of some for the completed grants to inform future programming. The identified grants for the three months evaluation will include CAS004, the rehabilitation of Odek administration block, CAS009 the rehabilitation of Purongo sub county administration block; CAS032 strengthening cultural institutions through peace and reconciliation, CAS017 the rehabilitation of Patira Primary Seven school and CAS008 rehabilitation of Amuru Alero Primary School.
- NUTI plans to hold a bidders and contractors’ conference to sensitize construction contractors about bidding procedures and expected working relationships with NUTI after signing a contract.
- NUTI will finalize the procurement policy and procedures, which will include development of more systematic procurement systems created to accelerate grant implementation.

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