



## Quarterly Report July-September 2009

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The overall goal of USAID/Uganda's OTI program is to 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 focuses 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 funding obligation to NUTI stands at \$13,247,048.

### **COUNTRY SITUATION**

#### **Security Situation**

The security situation in northern Uganda generally remained stable throughout the quarter. However, there were a few isolated security incidents including the invasion of Moyo district by southern Sudan forces. Meanwhile, there have been some reports about the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels committing atrocities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The UN reported that in the first two weeks of July alone, the LRA carried out 33 attacks in the DRC's Upper and Lower Uele Districts, killing 26 civilians and abducting 144.

There are discussions about the final solution for the peace process in northern Uganda. As presented in previous reports, Joachim Chissano, the outgoing UN Special Envoy, had recommended a two-pronged strategy of both military action and peaceful negotiation. The military solution was opposed by many civil society organizations and opposition political leaders who continue to advocate for a resumption of peaceful negotiations. During September, the LRA rebel leader Joseph Kony renewed contact with the Ugandan government, seeking an immediate ceasefire and resumption of peace talks. In the month of July, the government pronounced that a new rebel group was forming in the region. Several people from northern Uganda were arrested and put into jail, including a prominent Mega FM journalist from Gulu.

The recent International Criminal Court (ICC) indictments for crimes against humanity and arrest warrant for the President of Sudan, Omar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir, have tested relations between the Government of Uganda (GoU) and Government of Sudan. Al-Bashir, cancelled a planned trip to Uganda to attend the SMART Partnership Conference, fearing arrest. As a signatory to the Rome Statute, Uganda is obliged to effect the arrest if al-Bashir enters Uganda. The ICC's Chief Prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, made an emergency visit to Uganda to meet with President Museveni and senior government officials to reinforce the country's obligation to arrest al-Bashir.

In early September, tensions between the central GoU and the Buganda kingdom escalated when the GoU blocked the Kabaka, King of the Buganda region, from traveling to Kayunga a Baganda area. Riots broke out leaving about 23 people dead and several others injured. The aftermath of the riots included stringent GoU measures to control the powers of the Kabaka, his followers, and traditional leadership in general. Some journalists were arrested and had their credentials removed while some radio stations were closed by the government for allegedly "inciting violence" during the riots. These actions were widely condemned especially by opposition leaders and media bodies.





**Oil News**

Problems of land grabbing due to oil speculation persisted, particularly in Amuru district which possesses large oil deposits. There is growing public concern that unless land ownership problems in the area are addressed before drilling takes place, it could jeopardize the chances for enduring peace in northern Uganda. Meanwhile there are reports indicating that the GoU has secured a major oil deal which would provide it with 80% of the oil royalties. It is speculated that Uganda could be a future regional oil hub worth \$50 billion and employing over 50,000 people.

**Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP)**

Discussions regarding the PRDP continued. The end of June marked the beginning of the second phase of the PRDP whereby the GoU pledged US\$60 million for the first year of the PRDP. In August, the GoU released statements on its commitments to poverty eradication by signing a \$325 million development loan agreement with the World Bank to support rural populations for improved communications and quality of education. Approximately 30% of the loan will be devoted to implementing the second phase of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) which will aim to support peace, recovery and development plans in the region. During the month of September, the district officials of Gulu and Amuru confirmed that they had received preliminary PRDP funding in their bank accounts.

**OTI HIGHLIGHTS**

**Narrative Summary**  
Activity Summary

	<b>June-September 2009</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b># of Grants Cleared</b>	18	119
<b>Total \$ of Grants Cleared</b>	\$1,000,879	\$5,745,184

**Pending grants**

As of September 30, eleven grants were pending and are expected to be cleared during the next quarter.

**Indicators of Success**

During this quarter, the program achieved tremendous success in implementation. Following are several examples of key areas of success:

- Eighteen grants were cleared, for a cumulative program total of 119. Seven grants were closed this quarter bringing the cumulative number of closed grants to 39. NUTI and OTI team also celebrated the achievement of 100 grants within a one year period.
- NUTI summoned all successful contractors to explain program procedures for the disbursement of funds, sub-contract obligations and expectations and quality control measures.
- Gulu District received support to host the national secondary school athletics competition. The team from Gulu District emerged as the overall winner of the competition for secondary schools.
- Rehabilitation of several infrastructure projects in Odek sub-county was completed and handed over, including improvements to a primary school, the health center III, and a bore hole.
- Thirty-nine participants from Amuru and Gulu districts staff completed training in computer applications, including Microsoft office, Autocad, Unit Rate analysis, GPS, and mapping software. The training targeted the staff of the engineering and public works offices.
- NUTI completed and handed over a renovated office block in Gulu district that can house over 100 local government staff members. The building houses the Gulu Resident District Commissioner's offices among many others. The \$130,000 renovation is one of NUTI's largest grants.
- The Steadman Group and NUTI disseminated the results of a media and perceptions survey in the four districts surveyed Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum and Pader.
- The three-months-after evaluations for the rehabilitation of school infrastructure at Amuru-Alero, Patira and Odek primary schools were undertaken. The results indicate that the rehabilitated infrastructure has led to improved time management and created a more appropriate academic environment for teachers and pupils.



### **Retargeting/Flexibility**

Following the expansion to Pader and contrary to initial plans, NUTI has agreed to set up field offices in Pader district due to a request from the district authorities to host NUTI and because it was seen that another field office will greatly assist NUTI in operational, management, and grant oversight obligations. The recent expansion to Pader District completes NUTI's programmatic coverage throughout the entire Acholi sub region.

### **Resource Leveraging**

NUTI is working and coordinating closely with local governments and a number of international organizations, donors, NGOs, and US government-funded programs. NUTI continues to develop a number of grants to complement USAID's flagship development and capacity building programs including LEAD, NUWATER, NUMAT, Linkages, and the Public International Law and Policy Group (PILPG). For example, NUTI provided staff housing and sanitation facilities for health centers that NUMAT is supporting. NUTI recently procured equipment to restore the water supply to Kitgum Town with technical assistance from NUWATER who will continue to manage the facilities. NUTI used the plans developed with support from Linkages to identify priority projects in NUTI's target sub-counties. NUTI provided a cash grant to PILPG, in conjunction with the USAID/Kampala Mission, to support ongoing consultations on the draft ICC bill. Two bills are being reviewed by the cabinet and will soon be tabled in parliament. These consultations are a key step in Uganda's drive to achieve ICC complementarity, which is required for the Ugandan courts to be given jurisdiction over trials for war crimes suspects.

At the request of Gulu and Kitgum Districts, NUTI supported Makerere University architecture students to develop physical plans for upcoming urban growth centers, which have grown out of IDP camps as a result of the protracted conflict. These centers have great potential of becoming important commercial centers. Physical planning is a requirement for these areas to be reclassified from rural villages to towns which will enable the centers to generate revenue and improve services for local residents. While students normally undertake this assignment as part of their academic requirements, they provide value to the local government to develop physical plans especially for peripheral areas.

In anticipation of USAID's upcoming flagship infrastructure program NUDEIL, NUTI recently provided Amuru and Gulu district staff with training on how to cost, develop designs for, and map infrastructure projects. NUTI has also provided eight computers to the district engineering office, which are fully equipped with architectural and engineering design software. This equipment will enhance the capacity of the district to work with the NUDEIL program. NUTI is also establishing the Amuru District Engineering and Public Works Offices and providing housing for Amuru District staff. NUDEIL will rely heavily on the active engagement of the district staff in the implementation of the program. Having functional offices and housing provides an incentive intended to motivate and encourage staff commitment, which will be required for NUDEIL to be a success.

NUTI continues to collaborate with UN FAO and ACTED to successfully implement a large scale community access roads project. NUTI is providing the materials required to repair bottlenecks, small bridges and elevated roads bordering swamps, along the FAO-constructed roads. This experience will also be relevant for the NUDEIL program which will also use labor-based methods.

### **Policy Leveraging**

As noted above, NUTI has responded positively to USAID's policy that calls for collaboration and coordination among USAID funded programs. NUTI continues to closely follow PRDP developments in order to effectively and appropriately contribute to its implementation. To this effect NUTI recently prepared a report on the program's contribution to the PRDP. The report has been shared with the chief administrative officers in all districts where NUTI is operating. Currently NUTI is in the process of developing a grant for strategic communication about the PRDP as this development plan is the hallmark of the international communities' development policies in northern Uganda.





NUTI has continued to contribute substantially to the major GOU policy sectors as defined by the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. These include agriculture/NAADS, health, education and roads. For example, most of the infrastructure grants in all the districts have focused on markets, schools, water and sanitation, and health facilities. NUTI has tirelessly contributed to GOU efforts of peace, recovery and reconciliation efforts through various channels, including radio programs, concerts, documentaries and other strategic communication efforts. NUTI continues to implement grants within the decentralized framework largely focusing on the district and sub-county local governments as entry points. NUTI grants are identified through a collaborative process with the district and sub-county leaders and are largely based on the priorities included in the district and sub-county development plans, developed using the GoU's bottom-up decentralized planning process.

Recognizing the importance local government attaches to traditional institutions, NUTI continues to provide substantial support the Acholi cultural institution Ker Kal Kwaro. Currently, Ker Kal Kwaro is carrying out *Wang Oo* – or “fireside chats” in the local language – where the elders convey Acholi culture to the youth throughout Gulu and Amuru districts. These events take place within the local community on a weekly basis and provide a forum for discussion and storytelling about Acholi cultural traditions. This tradition was all but destroyed during the LRA war. With NUTI support *Wang-oo* can hopefully re-emerge as a way to bring families and positive cultural traditions together again.

The recent dissemination of the NUTI media and perception survey to the district and sub-county local governments in Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum, and Pader was a contribution aimed at empowering local government officials and other community activists with information related to media use in order to understand how communities perceive the relevance and contribution of the different levels of government to the peace and recovery efforts. This information can help local governments improve their performance and outreach initiatives, and will also help communities hold their government officials accountable. The attendance and level of participation at these dissemination meetings clearly demonstrated that the survey covered very relevant topics and sensitive issues.

### **PROGRAM APPRAISAL**

NUTI continues to record remarkable achievements in the implementation of planned activities as well as generating new grant ideas. In a period of five quarters, OTI/NUTI has cleared 119 grants of which 18 were cleared during this quarter. This has largely been achieved due to the good working relationship with USAID/OTI representatives in Uganda in terms of planning and decision-making related to the conceptualization, clearance, targeting and implementation of grants. The NUTI team has been instrumental in the achievement of the results. NUTI also continues to fulfill its mandate by ensuring that its grants directly and concisely contribute to the program's three strategic objectives.

### **CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES**

NUTI continues to encounter challenges, including the lack of local capacity, lack of commitment among local government officials, land conflicts and corruption. Some of these issues are beyond NUTI's control, but none the less are taken seriously and NUTI is constantly evaluating the most productive approach to minimize these negative realities. Plans are underway to drastically increase the oversight, monitoring, and evaluation capacity of NUTI's infrastructure projects, and the program's new approach to this will be visible in the next quarter.

Due to changes in operations staff, including the recent resignation of the Operations Manager for health reasons, oversight, mentoring, and training for staff and development of policies and procedures and systems that evolve to reflect the experience gained through program implementation has been lacking. NUTI has relied on short-term backstopping from Casals headquarters, both in the field and from Uganda, and is in the process of recruiting and hiring more qualified staff, both national and international, to fill these essential positions.



Although NUTI has been commended for having one of the most transparent mechanisms of selecting contractors, the program still faces common problems with contractors, such as noncompliance with time frames, poor workmanship and failure to remunerate workers. NUTI has installed close monitoring checks, and continues to penalize poor quality contractors. NUTI is currently examining other measures to ensure good quality work in all its construction grants.

Corruption tendencies and related rumors in northern Uganda are another major problem. Several vendors have attempted to bribe NUTI staff. Because of the rigid and transparent NUTI procurement systems, various vendors who have not been able to receive favors from the program have attempted retaliation. In particular, a malicious letter alleging corruption in NUTI was sent to a local newspaper in July. Other rumors have spread that certain vendors were selected because they provided bribes. Because of such tendencies, NUTI leadership continually reminds staff and the public about the program's zero tolerance policy.

The pace of grant implementation can be slow when counterparts fail to provide their contribution. For example, many government officials are reluctant to participate in an activity if they are not provided with allowances. Casals and USAID NUTI staff must continue to raise awareness among grantees about NUTI's approach, expectations, policies and procedures.

### **STAFFING & STAFFMOVEMENTS**

NUTI completed annual staff evaluations. Some staff were promoted internally and transferred to new positions. It is hoped that these changes will further motivate the staff who have demonstrated incredible commitment and dedication to the program. NUTI also completed recruitment for most of the Pader team and hired additional operations and program staff. Finally, recruitment began for the positions of Operations Manager and Procurement Manager.

### **NEXT STEPS/IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES**

NUTI will continue to develop new grant activities and ensure that all cleared grants are effectively implemented and adequately monitored. NUTI will work to close completed grants in a timely fashion. Next quarter, the following will be key areas of focus for improvements and implementation:

- Finalize the recruitment of senior staff in operations and procurement departments.
- Put in place a more solid plan for the monitoring and evaluation of NUTI infrastructure projects, including holding NUTI site engineers more accountable when quality control issues arise.
- Chose four to six new sub-counties in the four districts of the Acholi sub-region that will be focus areas for NUTI grant intervention.
- Carry out additional "3-months-after" evaluations for completed grants to inform future programming.
- Monitor the government's progress to roll-out the PRDP in the coming months.
- Hold a bidder's conference for Kitgum and Pader districts to inform potential contractors about the NUTI bidding procedures and to solicit feedback on contractors' expectations.