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NUTI Northern Uganda Transition Initiative

Quarterly Report

October-December 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 \$ 16,247,048 (as at 12/31/09).

COUNTRY SITUATION

Security

The security situation in northern Uganda generally remained stable throughout the quarter. However, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued to wreak havoc in the neighboring countries of Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR). The LRA are reported to have killed a total of 50 people and abducted over 52 civilians during this quarter

In October, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) spokesman Maj. Gen. Kuol Diem Kuol stated that according to intelligence reports in the region the LRA is attempting to regroup in southern Darfur. However, the LRA are greatly weakened and continue to surrender. According to intelligence reports approximately 153 LRA surrendered during this quarter. Of the 153 LRA, six were senior officials in the LRA including one Charles Arop, a top LRA commander believed to be behind the "Christmas Massacres" perpetrated last December in Faradje, north eastern DRC.

Political situation

Government of Uganda (GOU) and opposition have tabled a series of proposed amendments to the electoral laws including the Presidential Elections Act, the Parliamentary Elections Act and the Political Parties Organizations' Act. However, it has been agreed that no changes will be made to the constitution as had been anticipated. As a result, presidential terms continue to remain limitless.

The Inter-Party Coalition, a coalition of four opposition parties including the Forum for Democratic Change, Uganda People's Congress, the Justice Forum, and the Conservative Party, have agreed to field one candidate for the 2011 presidential elections. Members of the Inter-Party Coalition have been travelling the country holding campaign rallies. So far opposition political rallies have not suffered interference from the police apart from one incident in Hoima where the police blocked the opposition leader, Retired Colonel Dr. Kizza Besigye of FDC, from reaching a campaign rally. The police used tear gas and batons to disperse Dr. Besigye's supporters.

Exiled opposition member and Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC) presidential candidate Olara Otunnu returned to the country through the Busia Border point, where he was welcomed by throngs of supporters.

Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP)

The PRDP is the overall framework developed by the Central Government for rebuilding northern Uganda and improving the livelihoods of the people who were affected by the protracted conflict between the LRA and government forces. On November 27, the government launched the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund II (NUSAF II), which is funded through a World Bank loan. NUSAF II will invest approximately \$100 million in activities under the PRDP in 29 districts across West Nile, Acholi, Lango, Teso and Karamoja. In line with the PRDP, the overall objective of NUSAF II is to help northern Uganda develop and improve social indicators as in the rest of the country

The PRDP Monitoring Committee (PMC), the highest policy monitoring organ of the PRDP, held its second meeting on December 7, 2009. The meeting, chaired by David Wakikona, focused on reviewing the progress of PRDP implementation by finalizing a system whereby the PRDP can be adequately monitored by the Office of the Prime

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Minister. In a related development, districts will conduct regular self assessment on the implementation of the PRDP. The assessments will be carried out through regular district level stakeholders' forums. It is hoped that district-led monitoring will improve coordination and prevent fraud and waste, as was alleged to have occurred during the implementation of NUSAF I.

OTI HIGHLIGHTS

A. Narrative Summary

	October – December 2009	Total
# of Grants Cleared	35	153
Total \$ of Grants Cleared	2,294,759	8,185,249

Grant Approval Summary

Office	New Grants Committed in the Quarter		Total Committed	
	Grants	Amounts (\$)	Grants	Amounts (\$)
Gulu	9	511,300	99	5,252,119
Kitgum	10	617,799	36	1,744,863
Pader	16	1,165,660	18	1,188,268
Total	35	2,294,759	153	8,185,249

B. Indicators of Success

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

- 35 grants were cleared, for a cumulative program total of 153 grants and 67 grants were closed this quarter.
- Nine infrastructure-related grant activities were completed in Odek, Purongo and Agoro sub-counties. The grants facilitated the rehabilitation of health centers, sub-county staff houses, market stalls, sub-county facilities and primary schools.
- NUTI facilitated 30 screenings of "Roco Paco Wa", the Rebuilding our Homeland documentary, in the four Acholi Districts, Amuru, Kigtum, Gulu, and Pader. The 60-minute documentary on return, peace, recovery and development is aimed at assisting IDPs make informed decisions about returning to their homes. The estimated average attendance was 1638 people per screening.
- NUTI continued to promote the recovery process through support to physical planning efforts of emerging towns in Gulu and Kitgum Districts. These efforts demonstrate the government's appreciation of the importance of proper planning for spontaneous settlements that grew during the conflict.
- Pader and Amuru districts' development achievements were highlighted in newspaper supplements. This will help the Ugandan society get a new perspective of Pader and Amuru districts and hopefully make it easier to attract skilled labor as well as investment.

Speed

NUTI continues to develop grant activities to respond to the rapidly evolving context in northern Uganda. For instance NUTI has already begun discussions with key stakeholders including, the electoral commission, the district registrar's office, the solicitor general's office, NGOs, other USAID partners and donors to determine how NUTI can support activities that to promote free and fair elections in the north in 2011, promote continued conflict resolution strategies, increase assistance to at-risk youth, and promote the northern region as a peaceful place and an integral part of the country as a whole.

In Pader District, which is experiencing a rapid reduction in support from international organizations who had been providing emergency humanitarian assistance, NUTI supported the district to convene the largest district stakeholders' forum ever held. The purpose of the two-day meeting was to help the district plan and prepare to take over services and facilities previously supported by international organizations.

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Retargeting/ Flexibility

After 18 months on the ground NUTI held a three-day Strategic Review Session, which gave the team an opportunity to reflect on their past achievements, challenges, and the changing context to which the NUTI program will respond over the next year and a half.

With large scale development programs funding by the USAID mission and other international donors finally coming on line, NUTI has begun to phase out its support toward small infrastructure rehabilitation, which during the first half of the program comprised over 60% of small grant investments. Moving forward, the program will see how it can get more directly involved in other transition imperatives such as election assistance, youth, local government, capacity building, and conflict prevention. It is hoped that these new focus areas will complement NUTI's previous interventions and pave the way for a smooth phase out of NUTI in May 2011.

Resource Leveraging

NUTI is working and coordinating closely with local government 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 SPRING, LINKAGES, NUMAT and the Public International Law Policy Group (PILPG).

NUTI in conjunction with the USAID Mission is in the process of finalizing a grant to PILPG, which, in close coordination with the Government of Uganda's Justice, Law, and Order Sector (JLOS) and USAID's office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM), will provide technical assistance to the establishment of the Special War Crimes Division of the High Court.

Additionally NUTI regularly consults with other United States Government (USG) partners with a view of leveraging the USG's interventions, strengthening collaboration across programs, and minimizing chances for duplication. For example NUTI organized the inauguration of the Agoro market in close coordination with a USAID/SPRING project which had constructed a agricultural bulking and storage facilities in the same sub-county. The new US Ambassador made his second trip outside of Kampala to attend this high profile inauguration, which over one thousand people attended. Similarly, NUTI is procuring furniture for the Kitgum High School Cafeteria, which the US Military rehabilitated as part of Natural Fire 10, a joint regional training exercise.

Policy Leveraging

NUTI continues to closely follow PRDP developments in order to effectively and appropriately contribute to its implementation. To this effect, NUTI recently completed a strategic communication-related grant activity which widely disseminated information to communities about individual experiences in the return process. NUTI developed and screened a documentary profiling families that had returned from IDP camps to their homes and how they were overcoming the challenges of rebuilding their lives.

As soon as Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader received disbursements of PRDP resources from the central government in September, NUTI launched four new grants aimed at informing people about how the resources would be used, which will help manage expectations and assist people to monitor the districts' performance. Similarly, NUTI increased its surge capacity support to the Gulu District Engineer's Office as the bulk of the PRDP resources received will be invested in infrastructure projects.

Currently NUTI is closely following developments in the build up to the 2011 presidential elections, and is in the process of developing strategic activities which will tackle critical elections issues for which donor support is lacking or slow to come online.

NUTI has contributed substantially towards major GOU priority sectors as defined in national and local government development plans. These sectors include health, education, roads and market infrastructure.

Additionally, NUTI has continued to implement its grants within the decentralized framework largely focusing interventions at the sub-county level. Grants are identified through a collaborative process with the district and sub-county leaders and based on priorities identified in the local government development plans. NUTI recently added

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three new target sub-counties, Atiak, Awach and Lira Palwo and is in the process of identifying grant activities which contribute to its objectives.

PROGRAM APPRAISAL

NUTI continues to record remarkable achievements in the implementation of planned activities as well as generation of new grant ideas. This has largely been achieved through the excellent 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 very instrumental in the achievement of results, and was recently awarded the Field Team Award for 2009 by USAID/OTI, in recognition of their superlative performance and building to the foundation for enduring recovery in northern Uganda after years of destruction by the LRA.

NUTI continues to fulfill its mandate by ensuring that all grants directly and concretely contribute toward the program's three strategic objectives.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

- NUTI continues to encounter challenges, including but not limited to, lack of local capacity, lack of commitment and alleged corruption among local government officials and land conflicts. Despite the fact that some of these issues are beyond NUTI's control, NUTI continues to carryout constant evaluation of its grant activities to minimize the negative impact of these challenges.
- NUTI has accelerated its monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure that it is kept up-to-date and abreast to measure if the small grants are contributing to NUTI's strategic goal and objectives and how the lessons learned can be used to strengthen the program's strategic interventions.
- NUTI continues to face common problems with contractors. Among these are, noncompliance with time frames, poor workmanship, non-payment of their laborers, and disregard for sub-county rules and regulations. NUTI has installed close monitoring checks and continues to penalize poor quality work done by contractors. NUTI is currently planning an assessment of all infrastructure related grant activities for a more accurate picture of the extent of poor quality works and what can be done to avoid this in the future.
- The speed at which grant activities are implemented has continued to interfere with the rate of grant activity completion and closure. This slow pace of implementation can be attributed to: lack of coordination between the various implementing partners; unwillingness of the local community to volunteer labor for the development of their respective communities; and lack of commitment from government officials because they do not receive allowances from NUTI. NUTI continues to address this challenge by raising awareness about NUTI's in-kind grant policy and the need for community participation and ownership of projects as they are intended to benefit the community.

STAFFING & STAFF MOVEMENTS

NUTI completed recruitment for the Operations and Procurement Managers. Mr. Bill Barkle the Operations Manager arrived in the country on the November 25, 2009 and Mrs. Catherine Lumeh the Procurement Manager came to Uganda to attend the December Strategic Review Session and will be relocating to Uganda in early January 2010. Both traveled to Casals headquarters for prior orientation and training. NUTI also hired a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Procurement Associate for the Pader office, and Office Assistant for the Kitgum office.

With the recruitment of a new Operations and Procurement Manager NUTI will streamline, strengthen, and develop its operational policies and systems to better support the program team and ensure maximum use of resources. Meeting and mitigating operational challenges continues to be a NUTI priority and additional staff will improve the operations team's ability to respond the evolving program.

The ongoing procurement of a new project vehicle and additional motorbikes will allow a wider and more concentrated field presence for the team and support closer monitoring

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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 and has dramatically accelerated grant closures over the past quarter. The pace of grant closures will be sustained in the coming quarter.

Taking into consideration NUTI's shift in focus for the next 18 months, the following will be the key areas for improvements and implementation:

- Revisit the organizational and work flow charts and develop one-page narrative work flow documents, which will demonstrate the inter-related nature of the team members work, clearly define roles and responsibilities, and continue to cultivate NUTI's strong team spirit.
- Putting in place a concrete plan for monitoring and evaluation of infrastructure related grant activities, including but not limited to holding NUTI's site engineers accountable and responsible for shoddy completion of infrastructure interventions.
- Carry-out additional three-months-after evaluations of completed grants to inform future programming, ensuring that lessons and best-practices learned during grant implementation are applied in future program interventions.
- Monitor the government's progress on the implementation of the PRDP in the coming months.
- Evaluate all media and USAID Mission-funded grants to inform future grant activities for the new focus areas.

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