



## SUCCESS STORY

### Empowering Communities with Information



OTI/Kenya

Members of a community group in the Rift Valley set up television equipment to watch a parliamentary session.

*“USAID has given us a lot of courage and motivation to talk about issues affecting us and identify alternative ways of dealing with them rather than through violence.”*

*—David Birech, Lol Keringet Community Group Secretary*

**September 2009** – Northwest of Eldoret town, in Kenya’s Rift Valley, sits the village of Lol Keringet, or “inside a hole” in the Kalenjin dialect. The village is remote, and the villagers’ only access to the outside world is a long, winding, and dusty road that seems to pass endlessly through maize farms and pastureland.

The village’s isolation means that residents see scant evidence of government in their day-to-day lives and receive little information about political developments in Nairobi. And although Lol Keringet appears to be buffered from outside influences, in the days following the 2008 election, large numbers of youthful “warriors” allegedly left the area and made their way to Eldoret, a hot bed of the post-election violence, to express dissent.

Lack of information and opportunities for constructive political dialogue affects not only Lol Keringet but also many rural communities throughout Kenya. So to help overcome this challenge, USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives has funded eight community centers in Nandi District, near Eldoret, equipping the centers with television sets so residents can watch parliamentary proceedings and discuss their implications.

Consequently, citizen awareness of political happenings in Nairobi is increasing. The centers—which in some areas have brought people together for the first time since the 2008 violence—also provide daily newspapers, books on topical issues, and recordings of parliamentary sessions.

One of the centers has been set up in Lol Keringet, and the residents are beginning to have better-informed discussions on issues affecting them. “The violence erupted because we did not have other alternative ways to respond to anger and frustration over the poll results,” said David Birech, the village’s Community Group Secretary. “If we continue to have such meetings, the knowledge will change Lol Keringet,” he said.

Each center now hosts more than 200 community members every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday when Parliament is in session. And residents have begun to organize themselves into groups to share ideas and information and open up the villages.

At the other end of the information chain, USAID/OTI is working with the Kenyan Parliament to ensure that continuous and free live television and radio feeds are available to all radio and television stations in the country.