



Office of Transition Initiatives

UGANDA



OTI MISSION STATEMENT

To support U.S. foreign policy objectives by helping local partners advance peace and democracy in priority countries in crisis. Seizing critical windows of opportunity, OTI works on the ground to provide fast, flexible short-term assistance targeted at key political transition and stabilization needs.

FAST FACTS

Start Date: June 2008
Budget: \$7.85 million (FY09)

USAID/OTI

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched the Northern Uganda Transition Initiative in June 2008. The program supports the voluntary return of internally displaced Ugandans to their homes by increasing their confidence in the ability of the Government of Uganda (GOU) to deliver strategic services and strive for their welfare. To assist these efforts, OTI focuses on three objectives: (1) increasing access to information on peace, recovery, and development programs through media and strategic communications; (2) increasing the visibility of, and confidence in, the GOU through the delivery of strategic interventions; and (3) supporting truth and reconciliation initiatives.

ACTIVITIES

The OTI program is based in the Acholi region of northern Uganda, and projects run in the districts of Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum, and Pader. Activities include the following:

Support to Government Infrastructure Renovations – Much of Uganda's public service infrastructure was negatively affected by the 23-year-long Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurrection. To help rectify the situation, OTI has worked through local government technical offices to renovate several schools, health clinics, and sub-county government offices in the Acholi sub-region. Government officials and citizens consider these types of infrastructure projects their highest priorities, especially in areas where internally displaced people are returning to their ancestral homes.

Increasing Information on Peace, Recovery, and Development – Population movement, land disputes, and the shifting of social services are just a few of the complex issues communities face when people return to ancestral lands. Accordingly, OTI has worked very closely with radio stations to help disseminate correct and timely information to returnees in northern Uganda. OTI also supports creative and strategic communications that convey messages of peace, recovery, and development to the resident population.

Support for Reconciliation – OTI works to help heal the wounds of war with support to traditional and cultural reconciliation activities that are recognized and appreciated at the community level. OTI supports respected traditional leaders with their efforts to help communities recover from past atrocities and return home. Through these activities, cultural traditions are being reborn and reinvigorated. These activities are not only drawing children closer to their families and elders through positive cultural experiences but also bringing traditional music, dance, drama, and information sharing back into the homes and lives of war-affected populations.

COUNTRY SITUATION

PRDP Funds Hit the Streets – The GOU’s first installment of Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP) funds has arrived in local government bank accounts. In September, all districts in the Acholi sub-region received funding over and above their usual allotment. The additional funds are to be used specifically for PRDP projects in the health, education, water, and roads sectors. The tranche covers the first quarter of Uganda’s 2010 fiscal year and is good news for northern Uganda, as it demonstrates Kampala’s commitment to peace, recovery, and development.



War-affected youth in Purongo use carpentry skills to build furniture for recently rehabilitated government offices in northern Uganda.

LRA in the Central African Republic – In August 2009, the Uganda People’s Democratic Force for the first time acknowledged that it was actively pursuing the LRA in the Central African Republic (CAR) with the full blessing of the CAR Government. Several senior LRA members have been captured or killed in recent months in the CAR, and LRA forces are fractured and running. However, the militants continue to abduct children and displace communities as they run. The United Nations has reported that since Operation Lightning Thunder began in December 2008, almost 550,000 civilians have been displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and the CAR.

High IDP Return Rates Spur Camp Closings in Gulu – Large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) continue to return to their homes, according to the latest statistics from the United Nations. At the height of the LRA insurgency 1.1 million people were displaced in the Acholi sub-region. However, as of September 2009, only 17 percent of

the displaced remained in official camps. Seventy-six percent have returned to their home villages, with the remainder commuting between transit sites and their homes. IDPs who remain in the camps are considered “extremely vulnerable individuals” that are not able or willing to leave. Six IDP camps in Gulu District were the first to be closed. These closures have been officially recognized and approved by the Ugandan Office of the Prime Minister as outlined in the national policy on displacements and return. With the closure of these camps, 115 IDP camps in the Acholi sub-region are waiting for official decommissioning.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 20 October 2009** - OTI will inaugurate a series of infrastructure renovations in Purongo Sub-County, Amuru District. The inaugurations include health facilities and a primary school, in accord with the program’s sub-county strategy.
- 9-11 December 2009** - OTI will conduct its second Strategic Review Session to examine accomplishments to date as well as possible adjustments to objectives as the program evaluates changes in the context in northern Uganda and looks toward elections and close-out in 2011.

GRANTS SUMMARY

During the 2009 fiscal year, OTI implemented 99 activities worth \$4,965,875, for a total of 116 activities worth \$5,877,046 since program start-up in June 2008. OTI has worked directly with more than 130,000 people and has supported dozens of small-scale infrastructure projects.

District	Number of Grants*	Number of Beneficiaries	Total Funding
Amuru	44	36,448	\$1,906,174
Gulu	62	61,012	\$2,135,709
Kitgum	45	36,219	\$1,475,035
Pader	21	3,212	\$360,128

*Double counting occurs because some grants are implemented in multiple districts.

HIGHLIGHTS

Gulu District Government Administration Office Renovated – In one of OTI's largest grant activities to date, the Gulu District administrative office building was completely renovated. Working through the Gulu District engineer's office, OTI contributed more than \$130,000 to the renovation project. The building was built by the British in 1932 but in recent years had become a symbol of the inability of local government to deliver services to the people. The project has provided functional office space for up to 100 district staff members. This large-scale renovation reflects the period of development and prosperity that Gulu is experiencing. It raises the community's confidence in, and expectations of, local government and stands as a symbol of the peace that has arrived in Gulu.



The renovated administrative building in Gulu provides functional work spaces for local officials.

Expansion into Pader District – The program initiated its first projects in Pader in July 2009 and is now active in all four districts of the Acholi sub-region. Activities have begun in Lira Palwo Sub-County and in Pader town, while OTI offices in Pader are scheduled to open in October. The local government in Pader is pleased with OTI's expansion into the district, and the program has prioritized assistance to the district council as well as the renovation of key schools.

Building Confidence in Local Government – During Uganda's long-running conflict, the LRA targeted government offices, which are one of the most visible signs of a functioning state. The conflict also displaced government officials, and many found themselves living in squalid camps with others uprooted by the violence. The effect on government at the sub-county level was devastating. As a consequence, confidence in government eroded, and communities lost faith in local government's ability to provide even the most basic of services. OTI is working to change the public's negative perceptions of government, focusing efforts at the sub-county level where decisions are made and ownership rests with the community. This sub-county approach mirrors that of the Ugandan government, which gives local government significant leeway in prioritizing local development needs. Once the program identifies a sub-county to work in, a community meeting is scheduled to identify and prioritize a series of 7 to 10 grants worth approximately \$300,000. Sub-county-level activities are taking place in Agoro, Alero, Kitgum, Matidi, Odek, Pabbo, and Purongo.

Media Strengthening – Currently, OTI is the only program focused on building the media sector in northern Uganda. The program is working not only to improve the quality of reporting on peace and recovery but also to provide the equipment that radio stations need to function effectively and professionally. To date, OTI has implemented 19 activities worth \$677,746 to improve access to information on issues of peace, recovery, and development in northern Uganda. The program has provided key radio stations in the region with technical equipment, including generators, repeaters that increase broadcast footprint, professional production equipment, and microphones as well as motorcycles that allow journalists to report from farther afield.

Support for the Kitgum Water Distribution System – In many areas, the conflict with the LRA shattered the local government's ability to deliver even the most basic public services. In Kitgum District, pumps that delivered water to Kitgum town were completely destroyed, and for over 3 years more than 30,000 area residents were forced to use overcrowded boreholes in town, increasing frustration and the spread of disease because of unhygienic conditions at the pumps. In August, OTI worked with the Kitgum town council and installed two new pumps, complete with new power sources and surge protectors, to refurbish the Kitgum water distribution system. The restoration of tap water to Kitgum's homes has gone a long way in increasing the community's confidence in local government.



A farmer heads home with seedlings received through an OTI grant.

Putting Down Roots in Pabbo – To promote agricultural pursuits, to increase household incomes and food security, and to help revitalize the environment, Pabbo Sub-County leaders, with OTI support, provided 10,000 fruit tree to more than 150 local farmers. The initiative is helping engage returnees in meaningful income-generating activities. The beneficiary farmers were in turn grateful to their sub-county government leaders, who correctly identified the need to combat deforestation in the area and came up with a response that provided additional benefits.

PROGRAM APPRAISAL

To date, the OTI program has met expectations for providing fast and flexible implementation of small-grant activities that are supporting the post-conflict transition toward recovery and stabilization in northern Uganda. The speed with which services are being delivered, with OTI support, has rarely been seen in the region. This alacrity is due in large part to the tremendous performance of the implementing partner, the relationships that have been created with government officials at all levels, and the coordination occurring within the framework of the PRDP. The OTI "sub-county approach," where specific sub-counties are targeted with a package of activities, ensures that people in return areas are able to quickly feel the effects of the small-grant interventions.

Increasing access to information on peace, recovery, and development issues remains an important element of the transition in northern Uganda. OTI is continuing its support to three radio stations broadcasting in Acholiland. In addition, the program is supporting efforts to complete the renovation of a media production facility that will be managed by northern Ugandan journalists. Once completed, the journalists will be able to use the facility to promote a more stable and hopeful northern Uganda to others throughout the nation.

Reconciliation activities have been a key component of OTI's programming in northern Uganda. By supporting cultural leaders and traditional activities, OTI has been able to place traditional leadership front-and-center in efforts to help returnees prepare for and deal with the issues they are encountering as they return to ancestral homes after more than 20 years of violence.

OTI faces challenges in engaging local governments and empowering them to accept ownership of local infrastructure projects. During the new fiscal year, the program will increase its focus on encouraging government to take responsibility for development plans through the entire process of project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

NEXT STEPS

OTI priorities for the next quarter include the following:

- Expand activities, with FY10 TI funding, to increase the visibility of local government;
- Target between 10 and 12 additional sub-counties for small-scale infrastructure projects (Sub-counties are prioritized based on post-conflict criteria and approved sub-county development plans.);
- Continue to assist local government offices in implementing priority PRDP activities as the GOU continues to provide PRDP funding; and
- Provide communities with information on PRDP implementation as well as on the inputs the central government is contributing to the recovery and development process.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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