



## SUCCESS STORY

### Programs Provide Vital Economic Opportunities for Youth



USAID/Uganda

*War-affected youths in Purongo Sub-County use their newly acquired carpentry skills to build furniture for recently rehabilitated government offices in northern Uganda.*

***The Norwegian Refugee Council's Youth Education Packs are mentoring and training youth in carpentry and furniture production techniques.***

**May 2009** – High levels of unemployment and lack of economic opportunity are two of the greatest challenges to peace and recovery in northern Uganda. The situation is especially severe for a generation of young people who were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army. In addition, as local governments start to address such impediments to peace, they need to demonstrate that they can lead and deliver a range of public services.

To begin tackling these issues, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) teamed up with the Norwegian Refugee Council and its Youth Education Pack (YEP) program, which is mentoring and training youth in carpentry and furniture production.

OTI has helped rehabilitate sub-county administration buildings, court rooms, and schools to increase the visibility of, as well as citizen confidence in, local government; however, many of the rehabilitated structures are empty and in need of furnishing before they can be put to full use.

As the first institutional client of the YEP furniture business, OTI has procured more than \$64,000 in furniture and furnishings—nearly 1,000 items—from the youth training program, building the confidence of the trainees and injecting much needed capital into the local economy.

The initial order for furniture for a local government office was completed by 100 Purongo Sub-County youths who were greatly affected by the conflict. The furniture was delivered in March to administrative offices that were recently renovated by OTI after years of conflict-related neglect.

Similar projects are providing furniture to rehabilitated schools in Alero Sub-County as well as to sub-county government offices in Alero, Agoro, and Odek, where the YEPs have coordinated closely with officials to make chairs, tables, filing cabinets, and door mats.

The activity will help local government function more effectively. For example, in Purongo and Alero, appropriate furnishings will enable court sessions to be held in a timely manner and, in turn, lead to improved dispensation of justice.

Through this collaboration, a local business has found an important niche, but more importantly, the youths in the program have learned a trade, gained confidence, and are helping their communities.