



SUCCESS STORY

Reconciliation Sets Stage for Returns in Kitgum



USAID/Uganda

Pubec and Pajong clan chiefs reconcile at a public ceremony in Kitgum District.



Bishop Ochola offers thanks at the reconciliation event.

May 2009 – At the height of Uganda’s insurgency, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) abducted a man from the Pubec clan. However, to deceive the LRA, the captive said he was from the neighboring Pajong clan. Several years later, following the man’s escape from the LRA in 2002, the rebels retaliated by brutally murdering 56 Pajong clan members.

The incident sparked a great deal of animosity between the two groups, and has led to frequent unrest between the clans and hindered resettlement in Mucwini Sub-County.

To support an ongoing reconciliation effort, the Acholi tribal chief’s office asked USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) for assistance with a thanksgiving ceremony. The event aimed to provide a public forum to acknowledge efforts to reconcile the Pajong and Pubec clans and, in turn, help create a harmonious environment for the return of displaced people and for the future.

Both the Pubec and Pajong clans began the ceremony by accepting responsibility for the clan-on-clan crimes committed following the LRA massacre. The acknowledgements of shared blame helped give the clan chiefs an opportunity to publicly reconcile, and most importantly, the Pajong leader openly forgave members of the Pubec clan.

At the thanksgiving ceremony, Bishop M. Ochola II (retired) praised the negotiating teams for their efforts, which have been ongoing since 2007. He urged the two clans to guard the new peace by trying to live in harmony. The paramount Chief of the Acholi, Rwot Achana II, also spoke at the event, urging the communities to live together and always find ways of amicably settling disputes without resorting to violence.

In addition, the ceremony proved a public relations success, as it provided visibility for Kitgum District and other political, religious, and local leaders and bolstered community confidence in government’s ability to respond to community needs.

The reconciling event, and the corresponding peace, will pave the way for development activities in Mucwini Sub-County, which OTI will continue to support.