



SUCCESS STORY

Drumming Up Support for the Return Process in Northern Uganda



Artists perform at a *Peace and Love in Our Homes* concert in Pabbo Sub-County, Gulu District.



More than 100,000 people attended the 15 peace-promoting concerts in the Acholi region.

July 2009 – This summer, for the first time in more than 20 years, northern Ugandans waited excitedly for a troupe of touring musical artists to come to their communities. The song and dance campaign, dubbed *Kuc ki mar i paci wa*, which means “peace and love in our homes” in the local Luo language, was initiated to drum up support for the peace process and to show that life in the region has returned to normal.

Northern Uganda has embarked on a path toward recovery, even though the Lord’s Resistance Army continues to operate and commit atrocities in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. And the peace has greatly encouraged the vast majority of internally displaced Ugandans to return to their homes and villages.

To help celebrate the peace and return process in the Acholi sub-region, USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) enlisted local artists to produce songs that express positive messages to youth, as well as the broader populace, about the return process. The songs were recorded for general radio play, and the activity led to the idea of arranging a concert tour featuring the musicians. The tour took the artists to perform in rural areas where return rates for internally displaced people have been very high.

The concerts provided not only a venue for entertainment and positive messaging but also an opportunity for local political and civic leaders to speak about issues affecting the return process, including the Government of Uganda’s Peace, Recovery and Development Plan, which aims to increase the speed of development in the region. One sub-country official remarked that prior to the concerts the only time people would turn up in large numbers was when food was being distributed. He said he was impressed with the turnout and by the messages of hope.

More than 100,000 people came to the 15 concerts. Twelve local bands performed, and t-shirts and bandanas were handed out to memorialize the event and the return process. Positive events such as these concerts help people who have lived for a long time under harsh and dangerous conditions to recognize that peace has finally arrived. The events help people envision a stable world where they can invest for the long term, a world where working for themselves, their families, and their communities can bear fruit.