



## SUCCESS STORY

### Building Confidence in Local Government



*Local government facilities, like the sub-county offices in Alero, were destroyed by the Lord's Resistance Army.*



*As residents look on, local officials sign an agreement that will kick-start rehabilitation activities in the community.*

**August 2009** – Government offices—one of the most visible signs of a functioning state—were frequent targets of the Lord's Resistance Army during the long-running armed insurgency in Uganda. In addition, the conflict 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. The attacks deprived officials of the basic tools they needed to properly do their jobs, such as functioning and centrally located offices. As a consequence, confidence in local government eroded, and communities lost faith in the government's ability to provide even the most basic of services.

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) is at the heart of efforts to effect a change in these negative perceptions, and, as peace begins to take hold in northern Uganda and reconstruction gets underway, attitudes are slowly beginning to change.

The program assists in increasing the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of government through the delivery of targeted, strategic interventions; however, the primary focus of these activities has been at the sub-county level, where decisions are made on the ground and ownership rests with communities.

The OTI-supported renovation of the Alero sub-county offices in Amuru district provides one example of a successful intervention, as the community now has a place where elected officials and civil servants, including community development officers, agricultural officers, local court officials, and health officers, can coordinate their work in a professional setting. The \$90,000 renovation has also given residents a place where they can find their leaders and hold them accountable.

The program targets sub-counties rather than spreading grants over a vast geographic area. This approach increases impact and builds the sub-county government's capacity to take the lead in implementing grants. To date, OTI has provided small grants for renovations of schools and health centers, construction of sub-county government offices, agricultural interventions, tree planting initiatives, and activities that involve war-affected youth.

OTI's sub-county approach goes a long way in ensuring local government involvement in the implementation process. It is facilitating ownership, heightening impact, and improving residents' faith in their local leaders.