



SUCCESS STORY

Reducing Land-Related Violence in Northern Uganda



USAID/OTI Uganda

A local government and community dialogue session addresses conflicts over land in the northern Ugandan village of Angaba.

The overall goal of USAID/Uganda's OTI program is to support the voluntary return of displaced northern Ugandans by increasing their confidence in the government and in the ongoing transition process. Toward this goal, OTI will focus on the following objectives:

1. Enhance the capacity of the Ugandan media, particularly in northern Uganda, to research, inform, and report on issues relevant to peace, recovery, and development;
2. Increase the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of government through the delivery of targeted, strategic interventions; and
3. Provide support to truth and reconciliation processes.

October 2008 – With the transition to peace currently moving forward in northern Uganda, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are leaving camps and returning to their homes. And many of the returnees, some of whom have spent two decades in camps, would like to return to the land they left.

The returns are leading to localized, sometimes violent, conflicts over land boundaries and ownership. The responsibility to intervene and keep the peace when these conflicts arise falls to local government, which must address the disagreements over land rights as well as the needs of returning IDPs.

As part of its effort to assist government at all levels in Uganda, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) provided support to the Gulu District government as it spearheaded a *No Violence on Land* campaign in 11 of the district's sub-counties.

As part of the campaign, the district government, local governments, police, and the Acholi cultural institution Ker Kwaro formed an outreach team to meet with communities and groups that had returned. During the meetings, local government representatives declared their continued commitment to address community concerns regarding land rights.

Attendees were pleased to have direct contact with local government officials, as they were able to provide prompt responses to questions about land and property issues that arose during the outreach meetings. The sessions also provided residents and returnees with insight on how to approach property issues through legal channels.

The community outreach activities were complemented by a radio campaign that broadcast information on land ownership rights and on how to resolve land-related conflicts. Overall, the activities showed the returning population that local government is committed to addressing issues critical to establishing permanent peace in northern Uganda.