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THE RISING TIDE: UGANDA COUNTRY PROGRAM FINAL EVALUATION

April 2011

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Annina Mattsson, Robert Opio, and Emery Brusset on behalf of The QED Group, LLC under Task Order 40 of the Program Development Quickly II (PDQ-II) IQC, contract number DOT-I-00-08-00017-00.

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DISCLAIMER

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

ACRONYMS

AIT	Activity Idea Template
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CDCS	Country Development Community Strategy
COP	Chief of Party
COTR	Contracting Officer's Technical Representative
COWI	Danish Engineering Consulting firm
CSV	Comma Separated Value
GOU	Government of Uganda
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
JLOS	Justice, Law and Order
LCI	Local Council I (village level) Chairman
LCIII	Local Council III (sub-county level) Chairman
LCV	Local Council V (district level) Chairman
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NUTI	Northern Uganda Transition Initiative
NUDEIL	Northern Uganda Development of Enhanced Local Governance Infrastructure and Livelihoods
NUMAT	Northern Uganda Malaria AIDS & Tuberculosis Project
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PDO	Program Development Officer
PPR	Program Performance Review
PRDP	Peace, Reconstruction & Development Programme
SPRING	Stability, Peace & Reconciliation in Northern Uganda
SRS	Strategic Review Session
STTA	Short Term Technical Advisors
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
YEP	Youth Education Pack

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
INTRODUCTION	1
NORTHERN UGANDA	1
USAID	1
OTI	2
METHODOLOGY	4
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK.....	4
ORGANISATION OF WORK.....	6
OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT	7
POSITIONING	7
Planning	7
Assessments.....	9
DELIVERY	11
Responsive Management.....	11
Staffing and Procurement.....	12
Addressing Constraints	14
PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT	15
PROGRAMME OUTCOMES.....	15
Infrastructure.....	15
Cultural Programmes.....	17
Media	19
Technical Assistance.....	19
Economic Revitalisation.....	20
Law and Order	21
LEARNING AND GAPS	22
Depth of Local Government Involvement.....	22
Land disputes	23
Factors of Success.....	24
IMPACT ASSESSMENT	24
NUTI AND THE US MISSION	24
INFLUENCE ON DRIVERS.....	25
OVERALL CONCLUSIONS	30
RECOMMENDATIONS	31
APPENDIX A: LIST OF PEOPLE MET	35
APPENDIX B: SCOPE OF WORK	38

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This evaluation of the Northern Uganda Transition Initiative (NUTI) documents the results achieved by the programme, and captures some of the learning. This could be used for subsequent USAID programmes in northern Uganda, as well as for other OTI programmes. It is based on an analysis of how resources were managed in a constrained environment, how the population interacted with the individual grants, and how the outcomes interacted with the drivers of the local situation.

Instability prevailed in the north of Uganda over some 20 years, from 1987 to 2007, in the form of many conflicts. This engulfed not only the Acholi region (although Acholiland, as it is known, took the brunt of the violence) but also regions to the east and west, with a very different social makeup. A combination of the above conflicts exacted severe socio-economic losses, leading to population displacement, a breakdown in social infrastructure, severely weakened governance (especially for local and lower local government¹) and service delivery.

NUTI was launched at a time when the aspirations of the population in northern Uganda, as well as international and national objectives, coincided: to leave the camps where people had taken refuge, and to reintegrate in their home areas. The programme took place between 2008 and 2011, alongside the return of an estimated 85% of the population.

The three objectives of the programme were adjusted after the original preparatory documents were prepared, and became:

- Enhance the capacity of the Ugandan media, particularly in northern Uganda, to research, inform and report on issues relevant to peace, recovery and development.
- Increase the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of government through the delivery of targeted strategic interventions.
- Promote the transition through support of peace, justice and reconciliation activities.

These objectives were further refined at the Strategic Review Session (SRS) in December 2009 to (inter alia):

- “...abandon the ‘sub-county approach’ to infrastructure and outreach programs and adopt a new approach to the vetting and selection of small grant activities”;
- “...seek out opportunities to work with local and national government in their own implementation of the PRDP plan”;

¹ The term ‘local government’ in Uganda refers to District level government, while the term ‘lower local government’ refers to sub-county level government.

- “...increase participation in and acceptance of the 2011 elections”; and,
- ‘...seek out opportunities to involve at-risk youth.’”

The return was largely successful from the point of view of the population, and was accompanied by a massive influx of assistance, broadly framed under the government policy of PRDP (Peace Recovery and Development Plan). Some of this assistance was slow and gravely affected by the weak presence of the state.

Standing out early on in these efforts, NUTI provided small grants in remote areas, filling critical asset gaps and leveraging other reintegration initiatives. The programme was launched in May 2008, and was composed of 276 individual grants. The programme budget (including operational expenditure) was US\$23 million, and covered initially four Districts which were later expanded to seven, more or less coinciding with the Acholi region in northern Uganda.

NUTI is one of a number of USAID programmes operating in the region, such as SPRING, NUDEIL and NUMAT², and as such offers a good opportunity to review the articulation of OTI within USAID. The contractor implementing the contract was Casals & Associates, Inc, which was then acquired by DynCorp International in January 2010. NUTI closed on 15 May 2011.

Activities have been implemented in ten sub-counties selected for the political situation, community needs, and strategic advantages for success: four sub-counties in Amuru District (Attiak, Pabbo, Alero, and Purongo), two sub-counties in Gulu District (Odek and Awach), three sub-counties in Kitgum (Agoro, Kitgum Matidi, and Namokora), and one sub-county in Pader District (Lira Palwo). It should also be mentioned that a re-districting took place in Uganda in 2010 when NUTI was half way through its programme. This resulted in some challenges as newly established or re-drawn districts would request additional infrastructure investments.

Operational Assessment

NUTI was among the fastest USAID programs to be deployed in northern Uganda during the early transition period, working alongside the humanitarian agencies and occasionally carrying out work which the humanitarian agencies did not have the expertise, procedures or mandate for. The activities were a mix of light infrastructure, media, and cultural activities towards reconciliation. Grants responded to significant needs, ranging from schools and clinics to traditional cleansing ceremonies in areas where many people had been killed.

NUTI applied the well tested OTI methods to a context where fragility prevailed in the population (including a significant degree of social disorganization) as well as overwhelming capacity constraints. These can be described as:

² Stability, Peace & Reconstruction in Northern Uganda (SPRING), Northern Uganda Development of Enhanced Local Governance Infrastructure and Livelihoods (NUDEIL), Northern Uganda Malaria AIDS & Tuberculosis (NUMAT)

- A highly responsive form of management based on small scale grants under contract, a contractor operating in close coordination with a small OTI staff, and small sub-regional offices with a high degree of decentralisation.
- A strategic assessment method characterised by frequent consultations with all staff, a comprehensive database, and frequent adjustment of objectives based on available resources and the testing of various forms of activity.
- The deployment of many highly visible activities in areas targeted as most promising and serving as models for the others

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system put in place provides multiple points of reference for NUTI as the M&E officers regularly visited the projects in the field and recorded their findings in the NUTI database, supported by a number of independent studies and audits. However, M&E remained a relatively isolated function carried out separate from the project implementation itself, focusing largely on the activity level, apart from a few processes such as PPR and Strategic Reviews and two perception surveys the program commissioned. While these aimed to garner the possible impact the programme was having, the methodologies used were not appropriate to the context, showing little correlation between the findings and the NUTI activities.

When the contractor Casals was bought by DynCorp, a loss of some of the responsiveness and flexibility that had been the hallmark of the financial management of the smaller company occurred. Procedures for invoicing changed, and with the new ones came slower controls and less oversight of spending. This is due to the introduction of thorough controls to what are very small grants (all under USD 500,000), as well as the departure of the vast majority of the staff that had been involved in the programme at headquarters. Considerable efforts by NUTI personnel meant that the difficulties did not have operational consequences and did not affect delivery.

The team put in place also showed a high degree of commitment to field delivery, cohesion and complementarity, although changes in staffing raised particular challenges.

This contrasts usefully with the more structured and arm's length approaches used by USAID, providing it with significant elements of early visibility and momentum in a sensitive period for the country.

Programme Assessment

The analysis carried out by the evaluation team shows a drop in quality of life just after population returns, and a set of risks which could have led to a new crisis. The population experienced difficulties in accessing social services to a level comparable to that in the camps.

In spite of these difficulties, NUTI was able to operate close to the population, and focused appropriately on the main drivers of recovery:

- Encouraging the return to a situation of normalcy through media campaigns, and sending clear signals of change through local political leaders.

- Focusing on reconciliation and justice through quick impact interventions.
- Providing critical infrastructure, creating a pull factor for civil servants, users of social services, and communication.

The programme however suffered from three avoidable inefficiencies:

- A relatively unstructured contextual assessment, predominantly relying on the perceptions of the team, led to a programming that included untested assumptions, most notably in some of the cultural and economic activities.
- Poor design and quality control in the larger infrastructure component led to a loss of money, and less durable structures than could have been achieved with the resources available.
- Low degrees of consultation of key stakeholder groups (mainly members of the community and organisations not directly involved in the activity), and a lower focus on process than used to be the case in OTI (which in the early years worked through project committees), led to some activities having a more reduced buy-in from the population (although the practice of frequent inaugurations constituted a significant exception to that).

As a consequence, interventions that were close to the population were less able to address local level dynamics and insert themselves into the population's long term strategies than could have been the case.

Strategic Assessment

Relevance was high in certain strategically-selected sectors, such as education, while less appropriate for certain cultural activities. The extent of coverage of the programme was remarkable, due to the number of small grants, and a combination of support to core public services, media and high profile activities. The timing of the intervention was extremely good³, while on the other hand some of the infrastructure could rapidly deteriorate, which means that the influence will not be very durable.

The impact of the programme at the local level is hence judged to be good for the main components. It created a critical mass of change which, like a rising tide, lifted many other local dynamics favourable to recovery.

This trade-off is frequently faced by OTI programmes between achieving a preponderance of influence and in-depth influence, clearly results from the need for rapid implementation in the context of low capacity, particularly amongst construction companies. However it is striking to see that stronger up-stream quality assurance could have been provided without slowing down implementation. Had NUTI been able to avail itself of such advisory services regarding the design of small infrastructure interventions,

³ As stated by the USAID Mission Director in Kampala "OTI came in with guns blazing right on time ... and they actually left with guns holstered right on time. That's a transition success."

and had been able to deploy staff on supervisory tasks, the influence would have been more durable.

The evaluation did not find adverse effects deriving either from the way in which the programme was delivered (many in fact pointed to the fact that it had reduced opportunities for corruption), nor from the nature of the objectives. These were appropriately aligned to the convergent aims of the state, the population and the aid agencies. Dependency could not arise due to the short nature of the activities, and the rapid disengagement of the programme.

The most remarkable successes of the programme took place where it was able to tap into local strategies and coalitions of interest. Whether these be the interests of the law and order officials, or the interests of the local population in education, or revenue generation for the more professional media outlets, wherever the grants were building on something that extended beyond them, the impact was deeper. This was most limited for some cultural activities and for livelihoods. It should be noted that the programme caught onto this aspect toward the end of 2010, and evolved to focus on the activities with most impact.

The integration of OTI and NUTI into the Mission and the inter-agency process was remarkable. This was achieved thanks to the judicious positioning of staff with complementary skills in the field and in Kampala, and wholehearted and transparent participation in policy making.

Acknowledging the aspect, the US Ambassador also spoke highly of the opportunity afforded by NUTI to demonstrate commitment to the situation in the north. While the general programming preference for project support could have set aside the US effort from other development actors, NUTI provided strong evidence that clear benefits could come from direct implementation closely linked to local initiative.

It can be safely stated, when considering the other actors operating in the area, that OTI was uniquely positioned to deliver this impact, and to leverage the resources of other donors. NUTI was particularly useful as a pivot to push the government, local actors and others to become active at the local level.

New USAID programmes are to be launched, and the USAID Mission is seeking to adopt some of the more successful practices. It should be highlighted here that NUTI paved the way for other programmes that could avail themselves of the assets generated by it, in particular in the case of NUDEIL. In some cases staff from other programmes were able to step directly into the spaces created by NUTI (for example the engineers seconded to the public administration).

Recommendations

Recommendations for USAID Mission:

The evaluation team would list the following aspects of particular salience for the USAID Mission:

- USAID should consider retaining funding unallocated against any objective to launch new initiatives as funds become available, and more importantly as new opportunities or operational strengths or weaknesses emerge. This means that the objectives should not be too detailed, and targets should be allowed to emerge over time. That would allow programmes to respond to changing conditions even during implementation.
- Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) is a new approach developed by the agency through specific measures. NUTI offers useful guidance, particularly through periodic annual strategy review sessions that enable the reformulation of objectives. Carrying out these frequent, structured, real-time assessments provides recognised feedback loops on performance, based on participatory discussions with staff at all levels, and based on a strong field presence and frequent visits to project sites. Applying this to CLA would increase the sense of what works and also does not, and to which reserves could be aligned, even during delivery of the programme.
- USAID should extend the use of the procedure of grants under contract, more generally services based contracts (where Government provides direction as to how the contractor will achieve specified objectives, Government assumes primary responsibility for program success, there is an emphasis on process, and greater flexibility in terms of contract requirements) rather than performance based contracts. This allows for the selection of specific teams, and a direct involvement in the operation. It should be accompanied by high level commitment to having a USAID presence in the field, and allowing senior staff to remain in contact continually with the populations.
- The evaluation considered the differences of culture between an OTI that is willing to start many initiatives and to learn from the failure of some, and on the other hand USAID programming that relies extensively on secondary reporting and effectively limits staff's ability to spend extended periods of time in the field. This led us to conclude that it would be desirable for USAID to adopt more of this 'learning by doing', and send a clear message that staff should remain close to the field, and be willing to take risks. This risk taking should not have a negative impact on staff assessment – in fact quite the contrary, it should be considered a guarantee of better results.

Recommendations for OTI

The evaluation concludes that OTI delivered a strategically focused and timely programme at a critical phase in the history of northern Uganda. At the same time it would have been possible to achieve even broader outcomes by applying tighter feedback systems at the level of operational design.

- For OTI there should be the creation in Washington of a technical pool of personnel to support operations dealing with more specialist expertise. When large investments take place, contractors should be supported through short term inputs to ensure that they do not depend on external actors to define the

resources required to achieve a particular goal. Construction engineering, and small enterprise would seem to be two sectors that emerge from the Uganda case.

- The M&E system should be revised to better integrate the monitors and the evaluators into the management. Two specific steps could be taken. The first would be to adopt a specific structure in the application of SRS and PPR exercises to give them an evaluative edge, in particular the definition of key drivers to be addressed in the external situation. Surveys should also be framed to respond to evaluative questions. The second step would be to employ evaluators earlier in the programme, deploying a smaller team (one internal and one external person) at mid-point, and allowing them to return no later than three months before the end. The two stage visit would ensure that the evaluation is more directly relevant to OTI programme management, while the visit could be designed to correspond to the appropriate methodology.⁴
- The fourth recommendation would be to carry out specific analysis of the local strategies and coalitions that OTI could tap into to ensure that specific grants have the greatest possible impact. This could be done by resurrecting the well tested OTI practice of generating project oversight groups, formed by community members and local government officials. These would be active coalitions that would have an interest in ensuring the continuity of the investments and in continuing to work together after the end of the grant.

⁴ Such real time evaluation would have in practice a number of implications. It would take the form of yearly visits by evaluators that would work more particularly to frame the work in M&E and draw the implications of strategic assessments. These could be local personnel, which would reduce the cost, but the choice should be carefully discussed on the merits of the case. The visits would be accompanied by the development of tracer studies with specific groups of population (including participatory observation, focus groups, semi-structured interviews) based on specifically formulated and tested assumptions or working hypotheses that would inform the management of the programme. Each visit would last ten days, and at each stage would become increasingly autonomous, easy to organise, and less onerous for the programme staff.

INTRODUCTION

NORTHERN UGANDA

The Northern and North-Eastern districts of Uganda suffered from prolonged insecurity from 1986 - 2007. The Central Northern sub-region of Acholi was at the centre of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebellion, which subsequently spread to Lango and Teso sub-regions. The Teso sub-region and parts of Acholi and Lango suffered not only from the LRA war, but also cattle raids from the neighbouring Karamojong tribes. Within Karamoja, insecurity deriving from inter (tra) clan and tribal conflicts rooted in cultural traditions of cattle rustling destabilized the region. The North Western Sub-region (the West Nile districts) was also affected by the LRA conflict, though on a lower scale than the Central North, as well as enduring its own armed rebellions up to 2002.

A combination of the above conflicts exacted socio-economic losses and repression, leading to population displacement, a breakdown in social infrastructure, severely weakened governance (local and lower local government) structures and service delivery, and asset depletion. Consequently, poverty levels in the region rose and other major social development indicators fell far short of national averages.

In 2007 the Government of Uganda (GoU), after extensive consultation with all stakeholders, and as a result of a significant reduction in LRA activities arising from ongoing peace negotiations in Juba (Southern Sudan), launched the Peace Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP). The PRDP provides a framework against which all development actors, government and non-government, are expected to align their interventions to ensure that they meet the needs of the region and are harmonized within GoU sector norms.

The PRDP is a three year stabilisation plan. Full scale implementation started in July 2009 in 66 districts and municipalities, and is expected to end in June 2012. Aided by earmarked budget support from a number of donors, GoU committed Ugandan Shs100bn (approximately US\$50m) of funding through the national budget for the PRDP on an annual basis, a big percentage of which is channeled as a grant to conflict-affected districts to fund additional expenditures in PRDP programme areas, especially water, health, education and roads. The additional budget allocations are supplemented by additional on-budget, project-based donor funding implemented through government ('on-budget mechanisms'), and through off-budget through NGO implementation ('off-budget mechanisms'). Project-based donor funding is also expected to be coordinated within the framework of the PRDP.

The main transition drivers have been the return from the camps (generally seen as the most significant event by far in the north by the population), increasing livelihood opportunities in the areas of origin, the existence of land conflict, the presence of public services (first and foremost schools), and efforts at improving transport links and public information.

USAID

The United States Government (USG) is working with the Government of Uganda (GOU) to promote peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth and

humanitarian assistance in northern Uganda. The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) supports over 20 programmes⁵ in Uganda, focusing on strengthening the conditions for peaceful development in post-conflict northern Uganda, promoting the institutionalization of multi-party democracy, and addressing key health threats such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, and key development issues such as sound agribusiness practices and biodiversity protection. In 2007, USAID developed the second phase of a Mission-wide strategy for the transition from relief to development in northern Uganda and opened a satellite office in Gulu to increase presence there. New programmes have been since launched, with a focus on a wide range of sectors, aiming in particular to build local capacity and support the PRDP.

OTI

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives' (OTI) mission worldwide is to support U.S. foreign policy objectives by helping local partners advance peace and democracy in priority countries in crises. Identifying critical points of entry, OTI works on the ground to provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance targeted at key political transition and stabilisation needs.

OTI's programme in Uganda – the Northern Uganda Transition Initiative (NUTI) – started its activities in June 2008 and officially closed on May 15, 2011. The overarching goal of NUTI has been to support the transition of Northern Uganda from 22 years of civil war to peace and recovery by providing an enabling environment for the voluntary return of hundreds of thousands of displaced northern Ugandans through an increased confidence in their government and the ongoing transition. In practice this has meant creating the conditions that would make those displaced want to return and settle down, as well as renew the civic relations between the governed and the state.

In 2008, very clear security improvements provided hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people with a chance to return to their homes and communities. The progress led to a new focus by both the Government of Uganda and the international community on providing a path to post-conflict development. OTI had carried out two assessment missions in 2006 and 2007, but concluded both times that it was too early to start up operations due to the prevailing insecurity in the North. In 2008 after the signing of the Juba Peace Accords, however, conditions were judged to be right. Since that time, according to UN and GoU data, some 85% of northern Uganda's internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their home communities.

NUTI's overall goal and country objectives were first articulated in OTI's initial country assessment for Uganda in February 2008 and refined in the programme rationale (of which an initial draft was submitted in June 2008). NUTI focused on the following objectives:

- to increase access to information on peace, recovery and development issues in northern Uganda through support to the media and strategic communication activities;
- to increase the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of government through the delivery of targeted, strategic interventions; and

⁵ http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/uganda/northern_ugandan_project_activities.pdf

- to provide support to truth and reconciliation processes.

These objectives were further refined at the SRS in December 2009 to (inter alia):

- “...abandon the ‘sub-county approach’ to infrastructure and outreach programs and adopt a new approach to the vetting and selection of small grant activities”;
- “...seek out opportunities to work with local and national government in their own implementation of the PRDP plan”;
- “...increase participation in and acceptance of the 2011 elections”; and,
- ‘...seek out opportunities to involve at-risk youth.’”

In the light of these objectives, the NUTI approach has been to partner primarily with government departments to support rehabilitation of schools, health centers, government office buildings and other infrastructure. This would enhance the local government’s efforts to provide basic social services to the population and support economic growth and recovery. In addition, NUTI supported some cultural activities and provided support to media outlets.

The state-focused interventions were complemented by civil society initiatives designed to send a clear message that peace had returned to the region, and that the government authorities were leading the reconstruction process. Through support to the media, in particular radio, and other creative forms of communication and outreach, NUTI informed residents about what was going on in their localities in order for them to be able to make informed decisions about their lives.

At the time of writing the report, the programme had implemented 276 grants for a total budget of USD US\$14,006,000, excluding operational costs.⁶ These have been implemented primarily in the four districts of Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum and Pader (which have since been split up to include three new districts, namely Agago, Lamwo and Nwoya), with the exception of activities carried out under the Department of Defence (DoD) issued 1207 funds, which were nation-wide.

The OTI implementing partner in Uganda is Casals & Associates, Inc, a small, private sector contractor with a specialisation in good governance, which was acquired by DynCorp International in January 2010. The subsequent shift in management culture was to have an effect on financial management, as DynCorp had developed a substantially different business model from its defence work, and was not used to dealing with initiatives that would spend US\$1 million per month on as many as 460 individual transactions. This point will be analysed further.

The total staff for the NUTI programme increased from an initial 20 to reach a peak of 42 in mid-2010, with moderate turnover. NUTI operated out of a small office in Kampala, a main office in Gulu, and two sub-offices in Pader and in Kitgum. While initially the OTI field structure

⁶ NUTI Database, Cleared, Completed, Closed grants, from earliest to latest, generated on 05.08.2011. The total budget over the three years is an estimated US\$22 million, meaning roughly 40% of the budget is for operational costs.

included two Programme Assistants, a Deputy Country Representative and a Country Representative, this was reduced to a single Representative and two Programme Assistants once the programme began winding down in September 2010.

Prior to that, and unusually for OTI, the Representative was based primarily in the capital city while the Deputy was based in the north. This led to strong levels of interaction at both points with key stakeholders, including the USAID Mission. The departure of the Country Representative in September 2010, and increasing need for the presence of the COTR in the field, reduced the importance of the OTI “Four Corners” methodology whereby communication between COTR, Project Manager in DC, OTI Representative and Chief of Party (CoP) would be compartmentalised. Rather than creating confusion, this enabled NUTI to engage at different levels at the same time in a very authoritative manner, based on the issue to be addressed (for example the simultaneous inauguration of a local level official’s office, and attendance at a US Ambassador meeting in the capital).

The operating structure within NUTI, apart from Operations and a seconded team of engineers, is to have teams focusing on sectoral and geographic areas, comprised of a Programme Development Officer and an Associate Programme Development Officer (both of which are tasked to identify, approve and monitor grants) and a Procurement Officer. These small teams concentrate the knowledge and financial management that delivers the programme at the level of individual grants (that rarely exceed US\$250,000), under the guidance of the Chief of Party, the Operations Manager, and a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer. In effect NUTI was a highly field-focused procurement and delivery mechanism, in the mould of the OTI model.

METHODOLOGY

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The approach chosen for this evaluation is to focus primarily on the contributions achieved by NUTI among its direct partners and among the population in relation to certain key drivers. As such it partly relies on the elaborate monitoring tools developed by OTI around its Access Database, which has a strong focus on grants and outputs, but also includes elements of information on the context. The evaluation however avoids over reliance on general indicators of change in northern Uganda, except for some use of quantitative data that would seek to capture shifts in perceptions.

There are two challenges that justify this choice not to rely on baselines and indicators of progress, both of which relate to the specific nature of OTI type programmes, and more generally of interventions which take place in fast changing situations:

- The first challenge is that the programme is not primarily about developmental outcomes. While there are clear affinities with USAID mainstream programming dealing with public services and civil society, NUTI was primarily aimed at changing perceptions by delivering highly visible outcomes. The point of the intervention is hence not so much the quality of assets that were handed over, nor ensuring their utilisation, but rather achieving a shift in attitudes and beliefs. Tracking this particular chain of effects requires

a grasp of psychological and societal dynamics, which are not well captured by development evidence in (data poor) northern Uganda. They are best identified by the beneficiaries themselves through qualitative methods.

- The second challenge is that population perceptions are influenced by a host of factors, many of which remain invisible or are deliberately kept from observation. Furthermore a number of other official actors (including a large number of development programmes), external to NUTI, intervened in significant ways to affect perceptions during the time period in which NUTI operated. Amongst the few quality sources of information, the surveys commissioned by NUTI highlight this situation by indicating very small levels of change that can be correlated to the NUTI programme.

These two factors make the traditional contribution models of evaluation problematic. While the return of the population to its areas of origin, and the extension of significant degrees of stability, would indicate success, the breadth and the speed of the programme preclude relying on traditional indicators of development to determine that.

For example the most significant baseline that exists⁷ on the population's perceptions, which was funded in part by OTI, does not provide a reliable guide on the actual impact of the programme; comparing NUTI's intervention sites with the rest of the population shows divergent types of change. In Gulu, the population in non-intervention sites generally reports to be better informed about government services, whereas in Pader, the population in intervention sites reports to be better informed (in Gulu, the data in non-intervention sites may be influenced by the large urban centre). The survey also does not overall suggest a difference in radio listenership between intervention and non-intervention sites. However, there are differences at the district level, especially in Gulu where a much larger proportion of the population in non-intervention sites listens to the radio on a daily basis compared to intervention sites. This may be explained by the fact that a major city like Gulu, where radio access and consumption is likely to be better, is included in the non-intervention sites.

The first step taken to overcome these challenges was the subdivision of the topic (captured in the evaluation scope of work) into three levels at which interaction can be analysed, which are themselves often used in OTI:

- *Operational*: what are the strengths and weaknesses of the management model? This is where operational modalities and resource management is reviewed.
- *Programme*: what is the uptake of the activities and outputs by the target groups? This level examines the interface with the population, and the appropriateness of the interventions. It is referred to here as the level of the outcomes.
- *Strategic*: has NUTI influenced the key drivers of the transition? Has this contributed to the wider objectives? This level deals with questions of impact.

⁷ 'Transitioning to Peace: A Population-Based Survey on Attitudes About Social Reconstruction and Justice in Northern Uganda', Pham & Vinck, University of California at Berkeley, School of Law, December 2010, and 'Note on the Impact of NUTI', same authors and date.

The second step was to assess the quality of the interaction between different factors at each one of these levels, in particular those which NUTI could control to some extent:

- Interaction between the resources provided in the IQC, and actual management and delivery.
- Interaction between the delivery of outputs and the non-NUTI stakeholders, in other words the uptake of the target groups.
- Interaction between the results achieved by the programme (the outcomes), and the drivers in the situation.

This enables the evaluation to assess whether the contribution was significant, in relation to other external factors that have also had an influence on the overall situation. The significance of the OTI contribution was seen as more manageable, and sufficient, as a finding, than tracking the exact difference made by NUTI.

The link made is not one of direct attribution, however. This would be extremely difficult to do given the lack of control groups, and in particular the large range of interventions carried out amongst many others. The main weakness of the current methodology was not to have taken enough time to identify the transition drivers, which were elicited from only two focus groups. While these converged in their findings, four would have been preferable, one involving also participants drawn from government, civil society and donor circles in Kampala.

The evaluation was selected on the basis of its independence of the programme, made up of non-US nationals, and including one Ugandan. The latter declares a possible bias from working for one other ongoing programme in northern Uganda.

ORGANISATION OF WORK

In contrast with the broad focus of traditional evaluation methods that would seek to track indicators of change that are carefully identified in advance, this narrow focus on the interaction of key components enabled the team operate with limited time, and collect only small amounts of information which had not been already collected by the programme.

The evaluation team was composed of Annina Mattsson (project management specialist), Robert Opio (country specialist) and Emery Brusset (team leader). The team was actively and very usefully supported by the OTI Programme Office and the COTR.

Two of the team members met with OTI in Washington prior to and after the country visit, to frame the methods, ensure access to all the information, and validate the findings. The three person team spent a total of 19 calendar days travelling through Uganda, first interviewing US Embassy and Mission personnel in Kampala, and other key donor agency personnel, contractors and civil society organisations. In northern Uganda the team met with all NUTI personnel (including some who had left the programme), public officials, community leaders and three groups among the general population, convened for the evaluation.

All the information required to reach conclusions was accessed, including in particular the OTI database and e-rooms. The team capitalised on existing data and triangulated it with a few focus group discussions with stakeholder groups, and interviews. The evaluation also called on bodies

of research on the return of refugees to areas in northern Uganda. OTI's practice of rolling assessments and careful monitoring also provided a good basis for information on the modalities and evolution of the programme.

Some 35 interviews were carried out, plus two focus group meetings in Odek (village of origin of the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army) and in Lira Palwo (one of the sub-counties that received most concentrated attention from NUTI) for conflict mapping, plus two debriefing workshops held in Gulu for NUTI staff and in Kampala for USAID and Embassy personnel. A list of the persons met is included in annex 2.

OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

POSITIONING

Planning

NUTI followed the traditional script of OTI programmes as it was able to deploy in the context of a clear linear progress of recovery by the population, and carry out its activities in the original three year time-frame. While it is not handing over to USAID per se, there are several active USAID programmes that will continue in Northern Uganda upon NUTI's closure, and build on the assets and relationships already created.

The convergence of policy objectives around the programme was striking: for the first time in the recent history of Uganda, the Government of Uganda, the donors, and the main regional actors, agreed that the population should leave the settlements it occupied around the urban centres, and return to its home areas, benefiting from a process of rapid reconstruction. The people themselves were also keen to return to their traditional livelihoods and land. NUTI took full advantage of this convergence by deploying rapidly (the first grants were made within three months of initiation, which did not entail missed opportunities but sufficient preparation) and coordinating its agenda with those of the other key actors, in particular in Kampala where it participated in all relevant coordination meetings.

NUTI deployed alongside the humanitarian agencies, and was able to carry out very necessary work which the humanitarian agencies present did not have the expertise, procedures or mandate for, in particular cultural activities, or the rehabilitation of Ministry of Justice buildings. Aligning partly to the PRDP, and based on OTI needs assessments on the ground, the activities have ranged from light to somewhat more elaborate infrastructure rehabilitation, support to media and public information, and promotion of community reconciliation. The assessment method was based on the identification of key areas and stakeholders, and the identification of their respective priorities in terms that could be met through rapid small scale grants.

The context in which NUTI was operating throughout the duration of the programme was extremely challenging, not least because of the prevailing fragility of the population. This was due to the long time spent by the displaced in settlements, sometimes for up to 20 years, leading to a breakdown of cultural and social norms, land-disputes, overlaid by significant psychological trauma due to the violence that has taken place. Overwhelming capacity constraints also existed, in particular the scarcity of private sector contractors and general

technical expertise. Construction companies for example are typically owned by traders that recruit low skilled personnel and purchase basic equipment specifically to undertake development work⁸. These were not very reliable partners for the large amount of rebuilding done by NUTI, and posed a consistent challenge throughout.

The initial OTI assessment was carried out in February 2008 by a team of OTI staff and an Initial Program Rationale was agreed upon in June 2008. The objectives were articulated as follows:

- Enhance the capacity of the Ugandan media, particularly in northern Uganda, to research, inform and report on issues relevant to peace, recovery and development.
- Increase the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of government through the delivery of targeted strategic interventions.
- Increase the government's capacity to respond to the needs of their constituencies

However, the last listed objective was eventually removed from the OTI country objectives. It was decided that with a limited time and the scale of the problem, it was unrealistic for OTI to undertake the monumental task of capacity building of local government officials. In addition, other donors in the North were already rolling out large capacity building projects, such as USAID through its Linkages project, or the World Bank and UNDP. It was decided that capacity building would be undertaken only indirectly.

This adjustment decision illustrates how feedback processes operate within NUTI, leading to significant improvements that enable the operation to concentrate resources on areas with a greater potential of success.

The initial programme rationale identified the following modalities:

- *Focused geographic area:* three reasons determined that the programme was to work initially in Gulu and Amuru districts. Both districts had experienced significant displacement, and more than 60% of the population were still in camps in 2008. Consideration was also given to the presence of dynamic local leaders (known in Uganda civil service categories as LC5). The leading official in Gulu was an outspoken, national level opposition leader, while the Amuru district had the only elected chair from the government party National Resistance Movement in the whole of Acholiland. Finally, difficult logistics (lack of roads, office space, housing) dictated remaining close to Gulu. Expansion to Pader and Kitgum districts was to follow within 6-9 months.
- *Strengthening the visibility and image of local authorities:* the OTI programme was to build the confidence of the local population in their leaders. This was particularly important

⁸ There is a personnel shortage to ensure value-for-money in the civil works in the districts, as a result of the establishment of ceilings on wages. This makes supervision of both on-budget and off-budget difficult. For example the acting District Engineer of Gulu is the substantive District Water Officer. There are over 200 contracts (construction, borehole drilling and roads) running in Gulu District, and yet there are only three staff to supervise them all. The Office of the Prime Minister has expressed concern regarding these personnel gaps in public sector engineering services in the PRDP districts, and promised support.

after decades of mainly humanitarian and relief work, generating a certain dependency, sidelining the government. NUTI's aim was therefore to work with all levels of Ugandan leadership to emphasize their role in the peace and recovery process, and to provide credit for government officials by increasing their visibility and participation in the meeting of basic service delivery needs.

- *Synergy with GoU initiatives:* in order to support the above point, it was crucial for NUTI to work through existing vehicles such as the PRDP, as opposed to creating parallel structures. Supporting the PRDP with targeted interventions to both boost the speed of delivery but also to give the programme and the government's efforts in the North more visibility was identified as a guiding principle.

Assessments

OTI's *modus operandi* is to constantly review progress through multiple levels of analysis. Frequent consultation processes include all local staff, and allow management to make adjustments to the programme's focus. NUTI first reviewed the Initial Programme Rationale as early as August 2008⁹, and further refined at the Strategic Visioning retreat in Jinja in October 2008. It was here that the third objective of supporting truth and reconciliation processes was introduced.¹⁰ The sub-county approach, i.e. the clustering activities at this lower level of government and in specific localities, was also formally agreed in January 2009 although it had already been proposed in Jinja in October.

Adopting a focus on specific sub-counties is an example of NUTI's flexibility in responding to the local realities. It was clear as the programme started that the sub-county level and below are levels of government that were neglected by both the central government and other donors, and that targeting at the district level would only have a limited, if any, trickle-down effect to lower levels of government. In addition, District leaders were busy with many other issues and would not dedicate enough time to adequately work and coordinate with NUTI. Generally, the Sub-county officials were willing to invest time in planning and were often also more inclined to want more visibility with their constituents.

To increase the depth of NUTI's intervention, it was also decided that multiple activities should be placed in the selected sub-counties, re-enforcing each other, and be focused on priorities identified by the Parish Development Committees, community development offices at the sub-county level, and sub-county development plans.¹¹

The December 2009 SRS took place at the midpoint in the life of NUTI. This led to further revisions of the programme objectives, keeping in mind the changes that had occurred in the

⁹ This is when the 3rd objective of capacity building was dropped.

¹⁰ This was as a result of the removal of the original 3rd objective, namely building the capacity of local government, as well as reactive to the receipt of the so called TRUTH funding from the US Mission, totalling US\$1.9 million. However, the reconciliation objective was demanded by the mission, not suggested by OTI. It was adopted only in September 2008 when Senator Feingold asked Uganda to spend money on reconciliation, and the US Mission decided that OTI should take it and get involved with reconciliation.

¹¹ Strategic Visioning Letter of the Strategic Visioning Session in Jinja 15-18 October 2008, 21 October 2008

context in the past year, and that the programme now only had one and a half year remaining before close-down in May 2011. It was decided that NUTI would:

- *Abandon the 'sub-county approach' to infrastructure and outreach programs and adopt a new approach to the vetting and selection of small grant activities.* This decision, based on the assessment that change required a certain critical mass which geographical spread did not ensure, meant two things: 1) no more new infrastructure grants were going to be approved, and 2) approved grants would no longer have to be concentrated within the selected sub-counties.
- *Seek out opportunities to work with local and national government in their own implementation of the PRDP plan.* In September 2009 the government of Uganda for the first time released special funding to the districts that will benefit from the PRDP. For NUTI this was a window of opportunity to support the GoU in implementing the plan by providing training and technical expertise such as training to the finance teams at the district and sub-county levels, as financial management and reporting were a key prerequisite for the districts to receive funding.
- *Increase participation in and acceptance of the 2011 elections.* As the 2011 elections were seen as a land-mark and very important for the continued stability of Northern Uganda, NUTI sought to support the processes around the elections such as electoral registration, sensitization of the communities on their voting rights, building people's capacity to make informed voting decisions, training poll and electoral monitors, etc.
- *Seek out opportunities to involve at-risk youth.* Engaging the youth of Northern Uganda who had mostly grown up in IDP camps was key to stability. NUTI's aim was to involve them, for example, in the democratization process in order for youth to have the opportunity to become positive change agents in society. Activities focused around civic rights and responsibilities and issues related to the elections.

The revised objectives were proposed by the OTI Country Representative and the Casals COP, and discussed with the staff at the SRS. The key underlying theme that all the revised objectives had in common was the phasing out of infrastructure development grants. Given that NUTI only had 18 months left and that many infrastructure grants were expensive and that implementation took many months, the phasing out of infrastructure grants was logical. However, focusing on support to the elections, cultural activities, and capacity building did represent a significant shift of programme strategy.

In spite of reluctance amongst NUTI staff and many officials, who saw infrastructure as a greater priority, the logic behind these decisions was consistent with NUTI's focus on opportunities and timelines. The 2011 elections for example were directly linked to the stability of the transition process in Northern Uganda, requiring support for the electoral registration office or encouraging people to vote. Similarly the final infrastructure projects were finished just before the end of the programme.

In spite of this culture of openness, Monitoring and Evaluation were functions that received much less attention from NUTI, and became divorced from the management decisions. In effect, while the programme was actively reviewing its progress through the standard PPRs and SRS, and commissioned or used large surveys (such as the Steadman Study on the media

landscape) these exercises remained largely unstructured and were used in an intuitive (albeit active) rather than systematic manner. The grant level monitoring, which was delegated to more junior national staff, was much more structured, but tracked the lowest level performance of individual activity beneficiaries.

Two successive staff members worked on the M&E system designed by NUTI, which included Programme Development Officers filling a specific field in the database on beneficiary perceptions, and the M&E officer visiting the site some three months after the closure of the grant. The current evaluation itself forms a part of the system, including the preparation of the SoW and field visits by the COTR and the Programme Assistant, in cooperation with external stakeholders.

The evaluation team reviewed the monitoring reports, and found these to be thorough, but very much focused at grant level, duplicating the work of the Programme Development Officers, in what would naturally evolve into an unwelcome form of control – which it became over time. The control aspect would be lessened should the function have been more clearly linked to a broader analysis of the needs of the population and the general targeting of the programme, with more focus on population perceptions and less focus on the actual grant delivery (in other words: more focused on the context rather than second guessing programme staff). The links between the activities and the broader levels of impact, which the OTI M&E plan had foreseen to take place through a review of the prevailing assumptions behind the desired changes, were not explored. The evaluation team itself, including in the manner in which the evaluation was greeted,¹² gained a clear impression that the M&E function more broadly was not seen as serving management, but rather as a parallel and slightly redundant reporting system.

DELIVERY

Responsive Management

In order to be able to operate in an efficient manner, NUTI followed OTI's responsive management and maintained a rapid pace of implementation, including an average of 8.6 grants and a US\$400,000 spending per month, while at the same time allowing for sufficient controls to be able to minimise waste and potential misuse of funds.

The OTI form of management is based on quickly responding to priorities articulated by the local government and communities, eliciting these through frequent meetings by NUTI staff with stakeholders in the field, and the active cultivation of privileged contacts. The modality is to rely on small grants under service contracts, and the provision of technical assistance. These small scale grants are approved by the OTI Country Representative when less than US\$100,000. When the sum is between US\$100,000-US\$250,000 the approvals have to come from the DC-based COTR (who frequently travelled to Uganda in the last 8 months of the

¹² The evaluation was perceived to come at a time of intense work and be too late to contribute to decision making. It was hosted in a hospitable and open manner, but provided with a wide ranging and slightly rigid programme dictated by operational constraints more than methodological considerations.

program), and if the grants exceed US\$250,000, the approval has to come from the Contracting Officer (CO). Only three grants exceeded the US\$250,000 limit.¹³

The management structure was such that while the Casals COP, the Operations Manager and the senior PDO would jointly develop and oversee the overall programme, the three person grant teams were the driving force, focusing on individual grant delivery and local risks to implementation. Endowed with high degrees of autonomy, each team generates an Activity Idea Template (AIT), shared with all NUTI programme staff and then discussed at the bi-monthly NUTI team meetings, at which OTI would be present. If the AIT was marked in yellow (indicating a tentative yes) a CSV¹⁴ would be prepared and both would be submitted for the approval of the COP and the Operations Manager and passed on to the OTI Country Representative for approval. The period from the sharing of the AIT to the approval of the grant can take from a few days to a month, generating in effect a clear response to stakeholder requests.

Initially all NUTI staff were based in Gulu. However, as the decision was made to scale up activities to include Kitgum and Pader districts, NUTI sub-offices were opened in both locations. This proximity to the grants and the constant interaction of the grant teams with the beneficiaries and the local government officials at the district and sub-country level also allowed NUTI to respond to priorities when they were identified as well as deal with complication or challenges as they arose.

These procedures allowed NUTI to have a visible impact on the ground, with infrastructure being rehabilitated and functioning faster than under any other programme in the region. As several of the respondents said; 'NUTI did more in the space of 2 years than other NGO's have done in 5.'

Staffing and Procurement

NUTI's staffing and procurement policies were central to programme implementation. The recruitment process was managed by the headquarters of Casals & Associates in the US as opposed to by the COP in Gulu. This decision was made by the COP and proved an excellent way to avoid the perception of patronage, and reduced pressure on the existing staff to assist in the recruitment of family members and acquaintances. A short-list of CVs previously not seen by the NUTI senior management was presented to them only after a pre-selection had been made at Casals HQ by staff not at all associated with the programme. Candidates that the NUTI senior management in Gulu invited for interviews were chosen from the HQ selected short-list. Not only did this process ensure that only CVs of qualified candidates were short-listed (as opposed to candidates who had contacts/family members already working for NUTI), but it also gave a sense of pride to staff that were recruited that they deserved their position.

¹³ OTI NUTI Database, Project Contributions, accessed 05/10/2011. The three grants exceeding US\$250,000 were: CAS131 Promoting accountability and reconciliation through transitional justice (US\$375,000); CAS161 Equipping Kitgum LRA War Memorial (US\$355,464); CAS097 Rehabilitation of Critical bottlenecks along community access roads (US\$256,233)

¹⁴ Comma Separated Value – essentially a project budget prepared by the responsible PDO

The triangular decision-making in programming teams is based on close consultation, encouraging trust and an open discussion about the status of the grants. This is minutely tracked in the OTI database, comprising both financial and programme information, as well as indications on the uptake of the grants by the target groups. The database is accessible at OTI headquarters, as well as all NUTI offices, allowing for real time knowledge to be generated on progress. The evaluation team did not review the control systems, but these are spelled out both by USAID guidelines and Casals procedures.

In addition to the significant trust and decentralisation it placed in its staff, NUTI had a policy of staff development and training, complemented by elaborate team building sessions where strategic shifts would be explained and discussed. This encouraged a high level of job satisfaction, in spite of long working hours. These aspects should not be underestimated among the factors that condition delivery, and highlight the particular nature of OTI programming, where the donor-contractor-implementing party compartmentalization is dissolved. This contrasts for example with the prevalence in USAID of performance based contracts.

Some 97% of NUTI grants are in-kind, meaning that money is very rarely handed over to the partner organisations.¹⁵ For the overall majority of grants, NUTI does all the procurement and supervision, and delivers a finished product. This was consistently named by all the stakeholders interviewed as a factor of success. This can be understood in light of the context of Uganda, where petty corruption is widespread, but also in relation to the passivity that prevails in post-conflict environments, where people have been deprived from traditional coping mechanisms and capacities are weak to non-existent. Reducing the risk of corruption and increasing speed was central in allowing NUTI to provide results of a tangible nature, clearly visible by the population.

Two other elements of NUTI's procurement procedures deserve mention, namely the fact that a public tender procedure was followed for construction outputs, while NUTI retained the possibility for single-source procurement locally. However, the fact that single-source procurement is possible for smaller sums (computers, T-shirts, motor-bikes, furniture, goats, etc) means that speed is not compromised. There was also a high degree of local content where possible, adding a direct benefit to the local economy to the process.

Neither in-kind grants nor single-source procurement are without risk. While in-kind grants reduce opportunities for corruption by not relying on partner procurement systems, they have the potential to strengthen passivity and the expectation that foreign agencies will substitute for local government. The relatively brief engagement of local stakeholders in the NUTI process (there were for example no project oversight committees in NUTI) could not counterbalance this, while however the limited programme life (three years) ensured that the negative effects were contained.

Single-source procurement, while fast, had two less positive consequences. Firstly, some partners felt that NUTI was being overcharged on materials because of this practice which caused some unease both amongst the partners and some of the technical experts associated with the programme, and secondly while single-source procurement may have been faster in terms of getting the materials, it put the procurement officers under a lot of pressure as every

¹⁵ Only 6 out of 276 grants were cash grants.

step of the way must be documented and it adds significantly to the paper chase, resulting in more work in the back end of the process. Due to the considerable time pressure because of the burn-rate, single-source procurement added considerably to the stress of the procurement officers at times.

Local procurement, while beneficial in terms of supporting the local economy, also resulted to some degree in the use of sub-standard materials and delays in the implementation process, especially with infrastructure projects.¹⁶ The evaluation team was told of several instances where locally procured building materials such as cement or bricks were not of good quality or where relying on local community members for manual labor (collecting sand, painting, digging the foundations etc) or to partly contribute to the construction by providing materials (meals, making bricks, gravel, etc.) significantly delayed the process of implementation. These efforts to involve the local community in the implementation process were often abandoned as the need for speed would not allow for the delays that this often entailed, despite it being an excellent way of providing short-term income generation in the locality of implementation.

Addressing Constraints

OTI programmes are designed to create a preponderance of change in a specific timeframe, and this means that speed is prioritised throughout the programme and at all stages of the individual projects. This, however, resulted in fast decisions pushing both staff and the contractors to their limits.

In infrastructure projects, design issues were often not spotted in the pre-implementation phase due to NUTI PDOs not necessarily having the required technical background. In addition, design problems surfacing on-site were not always addressed on time due to the shortage of technical supervisors available. This often led to cost escalations and delays. In many situations, cost variations were requested by contractors. These could be justified by rain, which delayed segments of work, lack of materials in the locality, electricity failure, etc.

In other cases, the delays were due to circumstances that were beyond NUTI's sphere of influence. For example the I207-funded community justice structures, which consisted of police stations, court buildings and magistrate's offices, were based on designs submitted and approved by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. However, the Magistrates office was deemed too small by the Magistrates themselves on site. The design was therefore altered after the project budget had already been agreed upon which resulted in a variation order having to be issued for a large number of the I207 grants.

Design alterations after grant approval appears to have occurred regularly resulting in several infrastructure grants going beyond the acceptable level of 10-15% increase in planned budgets.¹⁷

¹⁶ While members of the STTA team mentioned several examples, the most obvious ones were the use of reintegrated former combatants as labourers to build the Community Hall for Peace in Agoro (in collaboration with the NRC YEP project), and the use of reintegrated former combatants to build all the school furniture for NRC built schools in Kitgum district. While both initiatives were very popular and seen as positive way to involve former combatants, the projects suffered from severe delays and problems with quality due to the understandable lack of expertise of the labor force.

¹⁷ Anecdotally, the percentage of grants that closed far under budget was much higher than the percentage that went over budget. While it is necessary to add a little "padding" to budgets, particularly infrastructure projects

Because of lack of contingency budgets, it was the only viable option to ensure works are completed to satisfactory levels. While variation orders in themselves do not represent a major problem, NUTIs inability to track and control these do represent an oversight in the management system.¹⁸

The acquisition of Casals by DynCorp in 2010 posed severe challenges to the programme, due to the imposition of financial management procedures of the new parent company. This occurred mainly through the application of more stringent and longer financial controls, leading to a difficulty in the presentation of the monthly vouchers, and at some points in time generating a high degree of confusion on the levels of budget spending. Respondents state that the budget problems that led to “crises” in October and January were the result both of miscommunication between OTI and Casals HQ regarding administrative fee rate changes, and of actual errors in budgeting done in the field and not caught by HQ. These problems occurred at a time of significant transition with the management and finance teams responsible for this contract, and caused OTI to temporarily question Casals’ management and oversight capacity. It also occurred due to the application of different levels of overhead, which complicated the book keeping by generating confusion around letters of credit.

Quite remarkably, the tensions led to the dismissal or resignation of all previous Casals staff at headquarters but two. Yet it is to the credit of the programme staff that these issues have not had an observable effect on delivery, in spite of the fact that they generated high levels of frustration. The tempo, the country focus, and the quality of the grants delivered have not been seen to vary between the periods prior to and after the acquisition. This is to be credited to the high quality commitment of NUTI and OTI management.

PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Infrastructure

From the beginning NUTI focused on small infrastructure development, starting with Amuru, Gulu, then Kitgum and Pader districts of Acholi sub region. The projects started with construction or rehabilitation of classroom blocks, teachers’ houses, health units and public service staff houses. These projects were either suggested by the local governments or by NUTI in close consultation with them, and reflected a gap recognised by both the population and general development plans for the region, specifically the PRDP.

During Uganda’s long-running conflict, the LRA targeted government offices, one of the most visible signs of a functioning state. The conflict also displaced government officials, and many

which are notorious for costs overruns, it is important to note that there was quite often “savings” when grants closed, but toward the end of the program these savings could not be re-programmed

¹⁸ According to the OTI Country Representative at the time of the closure of the programme, variations in grants were never intentionally tracked in this program and there is no mechanism by which to do this once a grant is closed.

found themselves living in squalid camps uprooted by the violence. The eroding effect on government at the sub-county level was devastating. As a consequence, confidence in government eroded, as communities lost faith in local government's ability to provide even the most basic of services.

NUTI focused at the sub-county level where decisions are made and there is most interface with the community. Once a sub-county is identified by NUTI as a priority, a community meeting is scheduled to identify and prioritize a series of 7 to 10 grants worth approximately \$300,000 in total.

NUTI interventions drew communities closer to their leaders through consultations, the commissioning of work, and handover. These interventions helped the sub counties to identify needs of their constituents. It clearly wove new relations between the lower levels of administration and the population. For example the LCIII (sub-county) Chairperson for Kitgum Matidi attributes his reelection to the support of NUTI to Kitgum Matidi sub-county.

The construction of local government office blocks was a priority for lower local governments, to provide an administrative centre. These interventions built the confidence of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their original villages. NUTI supported this return for example by constructing boreholes where there were none. The traditional dance competitions and home improvement campaign were subtle forms of incentives for IDPs to return home. Competing groups were supposed to come from villages, not camps, and to participate in home improvement campaigns. These services were to provide pull factors to ensure that some of the social services the IDPs were used to in the IDP camps are available in their own communities.

The interventions were mostly requested by the district councils and sub-county officials, in order to finish a stalled construction project or to rehabilitate a dilapidated one. The infrastructure projects included fully furnished district council halls in three of the four districts, a war memorial museum in Kitgum, local markets and sub county administration halls.

The infrastructure-related grant activity served as a platform for the financially constrained sub-counties to meet some of their development priorities, for which they did not have funding. According to the LCIII chairperson of Agoro sub-county, this intervention meant that he could focus on meeting other planning development priorities for the sub-county. A similar statement was made by the LCIII chairperson for Alero sub county.

There is overall appreciation for the new infrastructure by the sub-county officials who noted that the new markets, for example, boost their revenue base. This reduced each individual sub-county's dependency on revenue allocations from the district, which in turn creates room for flexibility in development planning. In all three sub-counties the sub-county chiefs noted that the vendors will be charged a minimal rental fee for use of the stalls.

The focus on small scale infrastructure gave NUTI high visibility early on, and respondents external to the programme often mentioned the buildings as a salient point of the overall programme. The ability to rebuild large public buildings, such as the District Administration building in Gulu, generated political interest at the national level. The visibility of the grand opening ceremonies that were held each time a building was inaugurated and 'handed-over'

from NUTI to the local government increased the perception of the return of an active public administration.

Support to school rehabilitation was a big boost, but parents who have not gone to school have different priorities. Before the war, parents were looked to for guidance and provision of much needed support. The war reduced parents to destitution with no opportunities to produce for or provide income needed by their families. As a result, children who could not go to school started fendng for themselves and by extension their families by engaging in petty trade, boda boda (bicycle taxi) riding, etc. Thus children became providers, instead of the hitherto provided for, having an effect on how they looked at their parents – if they were still alive.

Yet a certain lack of ownership still exists for many of these buildings, as was witnessed by the evaluation team. Both the local government officials and the community members would like to see NUTI as responsible for remaining equipment and maintenance. For example the evaluation team was asked on three different visits to different local government offices, provided by NUTI, if NUTI would bring curtains, clothes hooks, kitchen utensils. Even the community members were asking for NUTI when something was needed at the local clinic, school or community centre. This means that the sense of detachment of the communities vis-à-vis the local-government structures was not bridged.

The very visible construction was therefore not complemented by a public information campaign to highlight the extent of NUTI's involvement and where the responsibility of the sub-county office or the district government officials would start. Therefore, despite the important impetus of the programme - to provide the local government with infrastructure to create a type of pressure on them to deliver services – may have not been as effective as desired. It is very difficult for the authorities and public servants to argue that the lack of infrastructure justifies the continued absence of services once the infrastructure is there. However, if the population is unaware of the responsibilities of their local government officials in terms of service provision, they will continue to expect outside assistance.

The team therefore felt that use of local level public information around the grants and a possible add-on of low-level advocacy on government responsibility for service delivery would encourage community members to direct their demands for electricity at the NUTI built clinic, or water-points inside the justice sector compounds to the relevant political level.

Cultural Programmes

As part of the third strategic objective of NUTI – supporting truth and reconciliation activities – NUTI developed many grants focusing on strengthening traditional cultural aspects such as ceremonies involving local elders, as well as newer cultural activities such as break dancing.

A photo exhibition, focusing on the recovery of Northern Uganda, organized and held by NUTI in collaboration with Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA) in December 2010 was a unique intervention. It was meant to rebrand northern Uganda to combat negative perceptions about the region, change attitudes and perceptions about northern Uganda that became deep-rooted during the LRA war and improve relations between the region and other parts of the country and finally, promote investment opportunities in the region.

The traveling exhibition was held in many towns outside northern Uganda and garnered a lot of media attention. Interlocutors interviewed for the evaluation felt the exhibition undoubtedly contributed toward many Ugandans understanding and appreciating the peace and investment potential now abundantly open to all in northern Uganda.

However, there is a disconnection between the intervention objective pursued through some of the cultural activities, and the expectations of the community. This was manifest in the break dance-for peace-activity involving youth. While there are professional reasons for use of break dance as a methodology for peace building among the youth, respondents external to the programme stated that the communities were convinced that since the youth who grew up in IDP camps do not know the traditional dances, this could have been an invaluable opportunity for them to learn. Break-dancing was generally considered less appropriate.

NUTI also supported Ker Kwaro Acholi to carry out appropriate traditional cleansing ceremonies throughout Acholi sub region. These ceremonies involved proper burials of human remains that are found in villages along with other traditional ceremonies that make residents feel much more comfortable with the return process and the healing process that lies ahead. By supporting cultural leaders and traditional activities, OTI has been able to promote traditional leadership in efforts to help returnees prepare for and deal with the issues they are encountering as they return to ancestral homes after more than 20 years of violence.

Criticism was raised by few members of the Acholi community on the handling of the cleansing ceremonies. Much of this comes from political leaders who think the resources meant for reconciliation could have been used differently. There is a feeling that the money spent, lodging elders, removing them from their communities, and taking them round (against the practice of each chief dealing with the rituals in his own realm), could have been better spent on monuments, reminding the generations to come of the horrors that can occur when people turn on each other. Non-traditionalists and Christians also feel that such ceremonies are problematic, and are no longer appropriate in the present circumstances. However, the people who complained in the first place, said calm returned to the communities after the cleansing ceremonies, thereby justifying the investment as appropriate.

Wang Oo (talks around a fire) activities provided opportunities for cultural revival and transmission. During these bonfires elders and traditional leaders provided invaluable information and transmitted values and cultural etiquette to the young. These included teaching youth some cultural dances and ways of doing certain things. To get conflict-affected people back on their feet, support toward social reorganization, psychosocial support and values are imperative. People returned back home with new or distorted value systems. For example, the Shea butter trees were never cut (sanctions were imposed, and no one dared) for their food and weather regulating value, but during the war, people started cutting them for income generation, notably charcoal burning, etc.

It is worth noting here that the reconciliation objective was not identified by NUTI as a line of intervention to pursue when the programme set up in 2008. This objective was strongly encouraged by the US mission as Uganda had been allocated with a sizeable amount on funding for truth and reconciliation activities but the mission itself did not have the capacity to implement these. This insistence on OTI incorporating objectives not initially prioritised may partly explain the lesser programmatic impact of these specific activities.

Media

Media may have been one of the most effective tools that NUTI tapped into. This is due to the active nature of journalism in Uganda, as much as to the lack of material resources which created a gap that could be filled elegantly by donations in kind and training. For example, the capacity building accorded to northern Uganda Media Club, the equipment and technical support to three media houses and the innovative use of the media, made the local leaders more visible to the communities they serve. This generated some jealousy from leaders of sub counties that were not supported by NUTI, further confirming that the assumptions about the importance of the grants in local eyes were correct.

NUTI provided equipment and technical support to three radio stations in Northern Uganda – Radio King in Gulu, Pol FM in Kitgum and Luo FM in Pader. The equipment included studio, transmission and core equipment, and technical support involved tailored modular training on journalism, programming and media management, among other things. This improved the capacity of these radio stations to provide information and encouragement on return and development in the region (including the PRDP implementation). The capacity to research and provide appropriate information improved, a fact reflected in the Berkeley survey which shows region-wide improvement in the perceptions of the population.

The local radio stations, as part of their philanthropy, provided free airtime to the local leaders to encourage the returning populations, to inform them of services that are being provided by government and partners, to answer or respond to issues raised by communities still in the camps. The media support included equipment and training, which improved the journalistic quality, content, and listenership. This, thanks to advertising revenue, allowed them to expand their income.

The trust the people of northern Uganda have in the radios is very high, with one survey (Steadman, 2010) stating that 80% of the population listens regularly to the programmes. Audiences believe more in messages conveyed by radio than in any other medium.

Radio messages on amnesty helped the return of former combatants and the disarming of civilians. In some instances, in a direct link (as a result of messages aired on radios directing combatants to come over to the radio stations or another appropriate location) to the radio programmes, in Kitgum and Pader districts guns were found left at the homes of local council (LC) chairpersons. Other programmes used the traditional leaders to bridge the culture gap between the younger and older generations. Children's programmes disseminated rights of children and brought parents on air to clarify on issues raised by children.

Technical Assistance

The Engineering department (which is a District level body), was a significant beneficiary of the NUTI programme, as all respondents confirmed that the Short Term Technical Assistants (STTAs), hired by NUTI, were a considerable support to the district. They supported supervision of works and as a result, Gulu district was ranked the best PRDP implementing district in 2010. According to the district engineering department, as the government releases to the districts are always late, the end of NUTI was untimely. The last batch of STTAs left when most projects for the current financial year were just starting, taking things back to the old situations.

The use of STTAs was a significant contribution to the public effort, benefiting infrastructure beyond the programme's assets. As none of NUTIs PDO's or senior managers had an engineering background, the use of the STTAs to oversee the construction work was crucial.

However some limitations reduced the influence the STTAs could have had. For example, they were not involved in reviewing the original proposals for NUTI tenders, or the Bills of Quantity. This meant that their expertise was not applied to the NUTI infrastructure. The STTAs were also not mandated to decide on when to release payments to the contractors, despite being the face of NUTI to the contractor in the field. This resulted in a reduction in their authority in requesting the contractors to re-do something or to give each phase adequate time for a good quality finish (an example repeated many times was paint applied on wet walls in order to quickly move to the next phase and get payment cleared).

While STTA engineers were brought on board as the need arose, it was clear from the recurring project delays, substandard work and variation orders that more site-supervision was needed. NUTI brought in the expertise of a consulting firm (COWI) for increased on-site management and quality monitoring. This proved to be highly useful, allowing for the improvement on potential design errors at the time it was introduced, severe failings in quality control, and introduced more financial rigour. It was a major piece of work which provided a much needed expertise.

District Education and Planning Units benefited from the provision of much needed equipment and furniture. The computer laboratories provided have eased communication and districts can now link with Kampala and other districts with ease and this has boosted the job satisfaction of staff. However, it remains to be seen whether the districts will be able to maintain the equipment and the internet subscription (the first year's subscription was covered by the grant). There is going to be a gap in maintenance of infrastructure and facilities due to lack of budget lines and resources. While minor repairs and maintenance is the responsibility of the communities, local governments are supposed to concentrate on major ones. This is yet to happen, even though it is central to the PRDP. The team is not optimistic that it will come in time.

Economic Revitalisation

NUTI focused on some specific initiatives to generate income. In an attempt to promote agricultural development to increase household incomes and food security, and to help revitalize the microeconomic environment, Pabbo Sub-County leaders, with OTI support, provided 10,000 fruit trees to more than 150 local farmers. The initiative helped engage returnees in meaningful income-generating activities. The beneficiary farmers were grateful to their sub-county government leaders, who correctly identified the need to combat deforestation in the area and came up with a response that provided additional benefits.

In some instances, investments were not based on a solid understanding of market realities. While in the past government encouraged communities to save bulk surplus farm produce, this is no longer practiced by former IDPs. The storage of produce by farmers to wait for periods of need or better prices was not well received and appreciated. For example persons met asked questions such as; 'why should I bulk when I produce only 100kgs?', 'Why should I wait for better prices when my child is out of school or needs a pen?'. The erosion of social capital

and trust in the honesty of neighbors, who used to share the traditional bulking centres, has reduced the attractiveness of storing supplies far from the place of residence.

This sector has been appraised correctly by NUTI as its least successful. The reason given by staff is limited understanding of the local commercial realities, as well as the need for a more comprehensive approach than can be afforded through in-kind donations, especially given the limited time-frame of the NUTI programme.

Law and Order

With Section 1207 DoD funding, NUTI collaborated with the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) under the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. This was part of a global process which has been evaluated across different countries, and proved to be of marginal benefit to programmes. It did allow NUTI however to develop new activities identified as part of its rolling assessment. It was used to construct and equip court structures, magistrates' houses, police stations and staff accommodation. These structures (including residence for the Magistrate) were a clear indication to the communities that efficient justice was now attainable and therefore confidence in the conventional justice systems could be restored.

In Agago district (formerly part of Pader district), before the 1207 support, there was physical congestion as police used to share the same office with the county court. This meant that when police are working on a case, court work could not go on, and vice versa. With the NUTI 1207 intervention, the Court house and Magistrate's house and a police station with attendant police accommodation was built.

These physical additions have brought an increase in the cases reported and handled in this location. For example, between June and December 2010 less than 100 cases were reported to Patongo Court, but after commissioning of the two structures, between January and April 2011, this grew to over 100 cases, as observed in the registers by the evaluation team. In Kiryandongo, the population is very happy with the infrastructure. Sometimes, they just come to check the premises. They handled 215 cases in January and 366 cases in March.

As a result of the infrastructure support, nowadays the Kiryandongo court receives 10-15 cases a day, as opposed to 1-2 cases per day before the court construction. Officials used to send cases to Masindi (over 70 kilometers away). This meant the complainant would pay for taking the accused, police officers and witnesses to Masindi, making the cost of justice very high. This forced many people to opt to settle cases in the communities. Now the facility has facilitated speedy trials of cases, in one week, two weeks, one month and maximum three months. In the past, it could take forever to get a case sorted out to completion. These days, witnesses even come willingly.

In addition, the closeness of the police and court has improved the speed of handling cases enormously. The construction of the Magistrate's house has improved job satisfaction and service delivery. The Magistrate/Prosecutor sometimes even listens to cases on Saturdays. More importantly, the infrastructure has improved separation of duties between the Judiciary and politicians. In the past, politicians would just walk into court and interfere with case handling. This is no more. With these initial effects, it is clear that the 1207 intervention has improved the functionality of the justice sector in northern Uganda.

LEARNING AND GAPS

Depth of Local Government Involvement

NUTI increased the visibility of the GoU in northern Uganda, by including officials from commissioning to hand over of the finished facilities. Seeing their leaders involved in reconstruction programmes inspired the community members to consider that conditions had changed and to return, and subsequently to bring their children to benefit from enhanced social services.

However, when it came to the content of investments, some details were overlooked in communications with the local government. This created some tension, leading to the perception that some interventions were less responsive to the authorities. For example the district leaders in Pader complained that they were not fully consulted on the traditional cleansing activities and felt that there was little value for money in the activity. In Kitgum, it was the War Memorial Library project that was ranked low among district priorities and thus, not wholly appreciated. One respondent stated for example that "The American Servicemen constructed the War Memorial Library at an approximate value of US\$ 300m, but the remodeling and finishing seem to have cost around US\$ 500m," referring to the beams and columns that were added to a particular structure.

NUTI did many assessments but reports of some of these assessments were not given to the district. For example the choice of the model sub county did not involve the district local government. It was externally influenced. The district had no choice.

–Comment from District leader

NUTI came to the sub county and asked if the sub county community would support self help projects. After sometime, they came back and told us that Lira Palwo was number one in Pader District, and work started.
–Comment from sub county leader

In a few cases inadequate consultations led to duplication of efforts. For example, in Lira Palwo sub county, due to lack of coordination, NUTI renovated to block and built staff houses in Health Centre III, and Pader District Local Government built an Out Patient Department (OPD) in the same facility using PRDP funding. While this was not duplication per se, this concentration of investment in Lira Palwo brought an outcry from other sub counties that had not been prioritized for assistance. The Pader district officials stressed that had they known NUTI was going to concentrate their efforts in Lira Palwo, they would have focused the PRDP funding in another sub-county.

Typically, due to the time available, consultations in OTI programmes are not extensive. While assessments for sub-country prioritisation were done, some of the selection criteria were not shared with the district local governments, nor were the reasons for choosing some sub-counties given to the local authorities. To qualify for NUTI support, sub counties had to have active Chairpersons LCIII, functional administration (staff), large proportion of returned populations (former IDPs), among others. For example, the selection of Lira Palwo as a beneficiary sub-county by NUTI in Pader was questioned by the other sub-counties as others were considered to have equal or more needs. In addition, it was not clearly communicated

that the decision of which sub-county to focus on was made by NUTI and not the District Council, leaving the District Council under attack.¹⁹ The fact that Lira Palwo was partly selected because they had a highly dynamic LCIII and a good track record of community activism should have been communicated clearly. This not only reinforces the transparency of the selection process, but might also result in a positive reinforcement of pro-active behavior by other sub-counties in the future.

Certain modifications on the district level infrastructure were not communicated to the local government leaders. Most of these had architectural and cost implications, while ownership, as discussed previously, remained limited.

Land Disputes

Due to cultural degradation as a result of the long period of displacement, many conflicts have occurred. In the pre-displacement period land was held in trust communally and was divided into agricultural land, grazing areas and hunting grounds. After the return from the camps, many people who lost their parents and elders have been left in a legal void, for lack of land titles with nobody able to indicate to them their land holdings. This vagueness has quickly been exploited by powerful members of the community who have either grabbed or illegally annexed their property.

In the Acholi tradition, kinsfolk live together and are therefore secure in their land holdings and property rights. The 'Rwot Kweri' was the one who knew the boundaries of respective households and the clan leaders ensured that their members' holdings were protected. Selling of land was unheard of, since whoever held land held it in trust, using it and leaving it to future generations. The sojourn in the IDP camps changed all that. The hitherto non-monetary traditional economy changed to a monetized one.

Upon return, the traditional/cultural leaders were not yet settled in their areas of jurisdiction and some were not even recognized. In the ensuing mayhem, youths who returned to their original villages but did not want to live in the villages sold off portions of traditional land, and older ones who had lost most of their kin and had no care takers too sold off land holdings. This brought in a new era completely unknown to the people and for which they were ill prepared.

Wealthy businessmen acquired large areas of land, which had been previously unimaginable and for which customary law makes no provision. This was the genesis of frequent land conflicts. Where the cultural leaders have been reinstated and are widely accepted, the law empowers them to handle land matters and they continue to play a crucial role in resolving land conflict and restoring calm in the community by assuring the property rights of all kinsfolk. This crucial aspect of return has not been addressed by NUTI. This was because it was not a key focus of the programme, and due to resource limitations available to the programme, to appropriately handle land matters in the return communities in Acholi sub region.

¹⁹ In this specific case, the DC himself was from Lira Palwo, making it appear as clear favouritism while he, in fact, had no say in the sub-county chosen.

Factors of Success

Even though NUTI was attuned to the political currents, it was not fully able to understand the local interests into which it was contributing. For example it fitted very well into the media landscape, but ignored the intense sense of competition and communication that takes place in the journalism community.

The grants were most successful where they connected to a local agenda, or built on a local level strategy. For example the law and justice buildings allowed the relevant agencies to accelerate their work in areas where they had been barely visible and severely ill equipped. They failed when there was no obvious ownership, for example in the case of the culverts, or the granaries or Bulking Centres (which rapidly fell into disrepair). The programme delivery was not affected, but would have been strengthened by better tapping into local strategies and interests.

NUTI's fast track implementation was well received by both beneficiary communities and local government leaders. This is because it evades the bureaucracy in government and donor procurement procedures. There is already a complaint by the communities and leaders in the NUTI supported districts against the procedures and pace of other donor supported interventions.

NUTI could have easily explained the procedures and mechanisms for its programmes in targeted sub-counties. While the in-kind grants avoided waste of resources to corruption, in some cases a lack of information on the reasons for particular choices meant that NUTI was considered by local observers to be extravagant and wasting resources that could have been put to better use. As a result of NUTI's procurement mechanisms and the compromises on quality for reasons of speed, a few beneficiaries considered NUTI to be low on value-for-money. While producing quality requires time, there could have been, based on access to media and the visibility of outputs, a careful effort to inform the public on what could be done.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

NUTI AND THE US MISSION

The USAID Mission Director in Uganda, David Eckerson, singled out the OTI former and current Country Representatives and Casals COP as instrumental in ensuring the NUTI efforts were well coordinated and communicated with Mission plans and activities. The presence of the CR at the Mission in Kampala meant that any issues arising could be solved immediately.

While NUTI linked up with several USAID initiatives,²⁰ the relationship with NUDEIL21 whose objectives most closely aligned with those of NUTI, was prioritised. However, while the

²⁰ LINKAGES - USAID funded program aimed at strengthening democratic linkages within and among the three program areas i.e. the Ugandan Parliament, selected local governments and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The main objective of the program is to build the capacity of Parliament, local governments and civil society organizations to effectively engage with each other to improve essential service delivery to citizens at national,

relationships built by NUTI at the District and sub-county level will have paved the way for NUDEIL employees to start their work, there are already echoes of NUDEIL being slow compared to NUTI. The different modalities of operation will be the biggest hurdle for NUDEIL in terms of operating with local government. NUTI has set a precedent both in terms of speed (3-5 months) and mode (in-kind) of delivery that has been much appreciated.

In terms of coordination at both the strategic and project levels with other donor programmes in northern Uganda, NUTI can be seen as more of an observer than an active engager. While both the COP and the OTI CR attended relevant coordination meetings in both Kampala and Gulu, NUTI was not actively seeking to engage other donors. DANIDA, who funds two large recovery programmes in northern Uganda had never heard of NUTI and was certainly not aware of any possibly overlapping interests. While NUTI and JICA coincided in Pabbo sub-county on infrastructure development, this was not due to joint planning and JICA staff in Kampala were not familiar with the programme.

INFLUENCE ON DRIVERS

The UC-Berkeley survey on the reconstruction of northern Uganda which was used by NUTI to inform its programming found that by 2010 some 80% of the population felt very safe, while on the other hand economic livelihoods lag behind, with a majority obtaining an income no higher than in 2007. Many of them (20%) have also become embroiled in disputes relating to land (63% of disputes).

On the other hand the majority of respondents felt that the government was playing an increasingly constructive role in the provision of justice, security and human rights. While they gave the authorities a low rating for dealing with corruption or promoting peace more generally, they felt that public performance in the provision of social services (most notably education, by far the priority sector) was below par. Some 70% of the population felt that the state was not helping to build new infrastructure.

More intriguingly for this evaluation, the survey shows that there is no correlation between the sub-counties which have received most assistance from NUTI, and those which show better levels of access to information, satisfaction with infrastructure, or confidence in government.

For example:

- Comparing intervention and non-intervention sites suggest that informal sources of information such as friends, family, and local leaders are more frequently used in intervention sites. This is possibly due to the characteristics of the sub-counties before intervention began. A majority of the population (83%) reports that access to

district, sub county and local levels, through increased democratic citizen participation and improved transparency and accountability.

SPRING – USAID funded program aiming to mitigate the causes and consequences of conflict in northern Uganda with activities in peace-building and reconciliation, economic security and social inclusion, and in access to justice.

²¹ This \$30 million, five year USAID program aims to: inject capital into the rural countryside, targeting IDP communities; rehabilitate social and economic infrastructure with job creation; increase agricultural production through the rehabilitation of community access roads in targeted districts; and build capacity in District Governments to plan, implement, and manage infrastructure programs.

information has improved compared to the situation during the war. Improvement is most frequently perceived in Gulu (91%), and least frequently reported in Pader (78%).

- Despite the small increase in radio ownership, fewer individuals reported listening to the radio on a daily basis compared to 2007. This may be explained by the fact that people returned to their villages where radio may be less accessible than in camps, and where daily work activities may prevent them from listening to the radio.
- The results show no significant differences between intervention and non-intervention sites as regards access to public officials, with the exception of participating in a government planning meeting, which was more frequent in intervention sites.

Different factors may have intervened which have obscured the impact of NUTI on some of these key attitudes. These are listed in the reports as predominantly due to the presence of many other factors of influence that overlay the impact achieved.

The evaluation team would also add that such surveys provide very broad brush pictures that do not take into account the complexities of conflict or post conflict situations. Specific to Uganda one could list the changes in the population (the return changed substantially the makeup of the sub-counties), the shifting perceptions of surveyors and questionnaires in a political transition which locals find hard to read, and, last but not least, the exact nature of the outcomes. While one could argue that if the objective of the programme is to change the perception of the government it is legitimate to ask about opinions on the state, it is better to focus on locally recognised and often hidden visions of the state. The increasing attraction of justice structures described in the outcomes section above, for example, contradicts the general lack of endorsement of the formal justice system depicted by the surveys. One of the drivers, remoteness, by being tackled by the grants, has been successfully affected.

To evade this problem the evaluation has instead focused on certain key drivers identified on the basis of a participatory mapping with two focus groups. This Transition Mapping is a two-step process, the first of which consists of eliciting from participants the key trends and events that have marked their villages over the recent years.²² They are placed on a large surface in a rough chronological sequence, allowing for simultaneous and remote occurrences. These are then connected amongst each other by arrows that indicate that one factor contributed (but did not necessarily cause) another. In a second stage the analysis proceeds to identify particular nodes, or drivers, that have acted as catalysts for particularly rapid change, here a process of return, stabilisation and regaining of confidence.

The two mapping exercises yielded the following drivers, which can be playing either a negative or a positive role:

²² There were some 20 participants, selected on the basis of their willingness to discuss the transition, and their ability to interact comfortably together as a group, while ensuring a good degree of diversity of backgrounds. The participants in fact came from word of mouth communication, and arrived at short notice. They were asked to list the most significant events that marked the transition of the region in recent times (with no guidance given on what that would look like) and then the key trends. Such a process is more appropriate in this context than questionnaires or individual interviews as there is no threat from issues of manipulation or secrecy. The participants use their own words to describe the trends and events that will constitute the evaluation's drivers of reference, rather than terms based on foreign conceptions.

Odek:

- Return from the camps
- Growing income
- Tensions in the community
- Roads and means of communication
- Schools
- Conflict resolution by the communities
- Health and sanitation
- Fear of unexploded ordnance

In Lira Palwo:

- Return from the camps
- The return of children from the camps
- Campaigns of public information on local conditions
- Congestion in the camps
- Food production
- Possibility of school enrolment
- The reestablishment of parental authority
- Health services
- Land disputes

Assessing the relationship between factors of transition (the “drivers” to be addressed), and program outcomes, allows the analysis to deduce the significance of impact. It is about assessing whether a contribution has been significant or not. The criteria for assessment that we propose relate to the qualities of the relationship from outcome to issue:

- How focused is NUTI on the drivers?
- How broad or intense is this relation?
- How long does the influence last?

We have analysed NUTI's performance in relation to these through three different criteria: relevance (is the programme aligned to these drivers), extent (how much of the needs of the population were covered) and duration (were the interventions timely, and will the outcomes last beyond the end of the programme)? The *Relevance (R)*, *Extent (E)* and *Duration (D)* form the overall criteria of significance of the contribution by NUTI.

Relevance

Out of these drivers of change, the return from the camps was rated by far as the most significant, confirming the relevance of NUTI's objectives relating to that. Similarly, beyond social fabric issues (integrity of families and ownership of ancestral land) and economic wellbeing, infrastructure and the provision of education ranked very high, as well as the access to appropriate information. These have been the drivers correctly identified by NUTI through its different assessment stages.

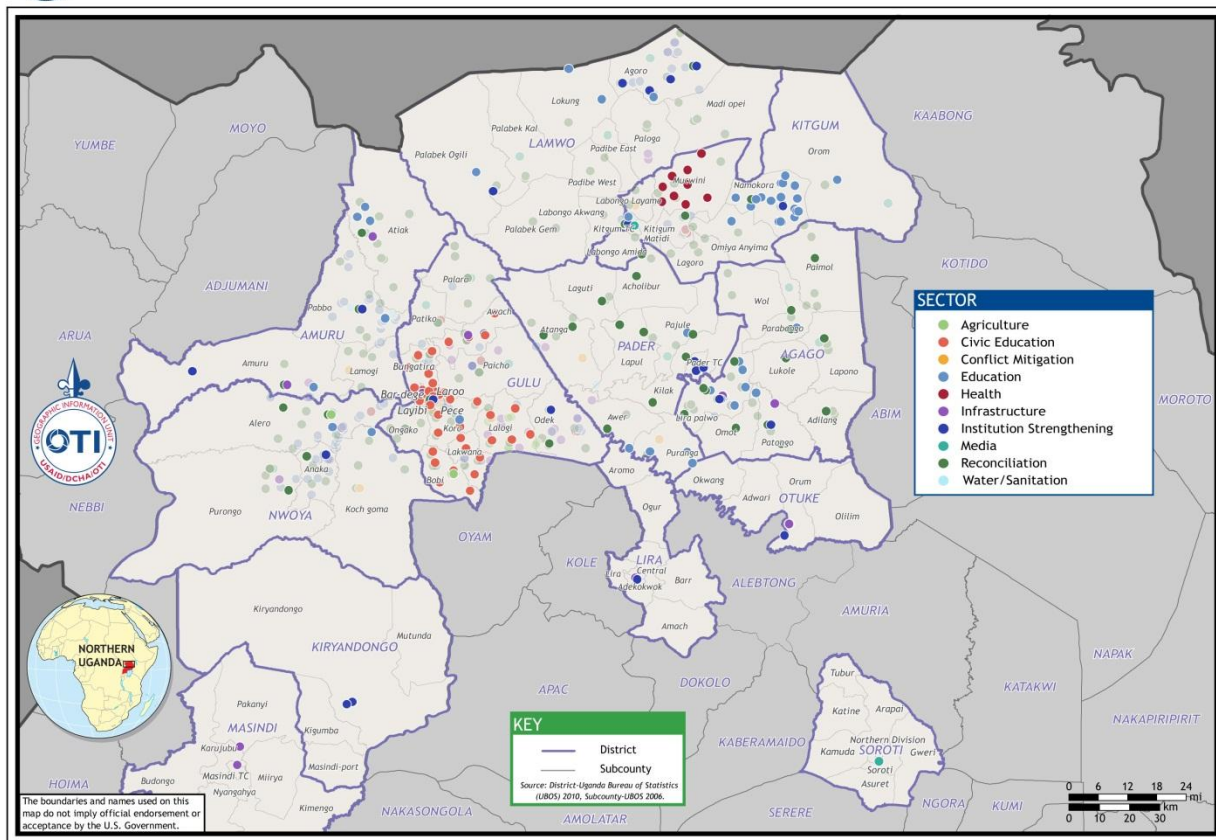
Here again however the presence of the state and confidence in its authority is playing out in a complex way. Relations to the state have not been named by the participants as an important consideration for them, and the perception surveys show a relatively low degree of confidence. While the programme sought to promote the presence of public services, it did so in a way which would not be recognised explicitly by the population, but more as a structural underlying factor.

By carrying out its work, NUTI also highlighted its brand and the US origin of the aid, showing that it was at best an instrument preparing for the return of public services, not operating in the optic of being the state itself, as has been done in other countries (Colombia and Pakistan). By doing so it confirmed for the population that international aid was to be expected to a higher degree than national service delivery. This is also confirmed by the expectation described under the programme level outcomes, that NUTI, like other aid interventions, would continue to substitute for the lack of local resources.

We conclude that the greater relevance of NUTI for the population lay in its support to justice and education infrastructure and media campaigns, while the focus on government was more relevant to the pursuit of high level political buy in – the electoral support which the programme was seen to provide to the elected officials in northern Uganda. We could not conclude on the cultural programmes, which can be seen to relate to community level reconciliation, but do not deal with issues of land conflict. The mapping process, focusing on different stages over the years, showed that this fact remained stable over time.

Extent

The following map was produced by OTI and reflects the geographic coverage of NUTI over the three years:



The map shows nodes of density of coverage around specific focus areas those sub-counties where it would obtain most buy in and support from the authorities, hence better interface with the communities. There is broad coverage for education and infrastructure, dealing with two drivers. The areas with more coverage show a sensitivity to the spatial distribution of the conflict, such as for Odek Sub-County, where the leader of the LRA originated. The media grants were in fact distributed over a wide area, as radio audiences are one of the most widespread for all media. The public demonstration effect provided by new buildings to the larger public, not least the District Administration in Gulu, extends much beyond the circle of its direct users. In this sense the programme has had considerable reach, scoring high in terms of extent.

The later phase of the programme, dealing less with infrastructure and more with diffuse social and reconciliation issues, was less geographically defined, and can be seen to have affected a lesser part of the population. OTI has not collected consistent data on the number of beneficiaries, so this cannot be further elaborated. There would be significant differences between the services linked to infrastructure and the cultural and media grants.

Duration

The timing of the intervention was practically perfect in terms of the time at which the particular drivers came into play. In Odek for example the communities returned to face a number of challenges relating to poor transport, lack of access to clean water, and a rise in

tensions. The facilitation by NUTI of the delivery of some key services (including health and education) was a rapid response to those needs.

Interestingly, in Odek the work that had been done to protect the roads from being swept away during the rains in the form of culverts did not lead to long lasting benefits: at the time of the evaluation these had been washed away, and no particular authority was identified to repair them.

More generally while some aspects of the NUTI programme connected well to local dynamics by building on the work of existing actors (the police force, the teachers, radio stations), others failed to find this connection (livelihoods initiatives, some of the work on culverts, some public sector buildings for which few resources can be expected to be allocated to maintenance). Some of the buildings were beginning to show fatal flaws at the time of the evaluation visit, boding poorly for their prolonged effect on population perceptions.

This important element of the duration of the influence of NUTI grants on the drivers of change, the existence of local strategies to perpetuate the effects, was not identified as such by NUTI. This means that the duration of the influence of the programme is low.

Conclusion on impact

The conclusions regarding overall impact are positive overall, when taking into account the general objectives and above all the need to provide to the population tangible proof of peace and the return to normality.

Over and beyond this the programme had an impact much beyond the northern Uganda population, by signalling to the central authorities as well as to US based stakeholders that the US Government was active in delivering rapid tangible benefits in the north. This was facilitated by the fact that the NUTI management adopted a posture that enabled it to obtain good buy in from political leaders, deploying a good publicity effort, enlisting them in inaugurations and other events.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

NUTI has provided an example of how much a fast paced approach can deliver in very constrained circumstances, when grounded in a continuous analysis of the evolution of the local situation and of specific entry points. NUTI has done this by being highly structured in terms of management, but very unstructured in terms of its analysis and planning.

The programme was very efficient and achieved a good level of impact, especially because of its breadth and ability to reach remote areas, as well as the relevance of some of its components to the drivers of change. The evaluation concludes that it would have achieved even more if three relatively inexpensive measures had been taken to address certain gaps in its delivery:

- The need for technical support for the more specialised elements of its work, in particular construction. The use of the services of an engineering firm was inexplicably limited to a very specific area of work.

- The M&E functions were loosely superimposed to the operation, while other elements of the OTI M&E plan (SRS and PPRs in particular, but also the database and the use of surveys) were not structured to provide evaluative knowledge.
- The critical ingredient of influence, the ability to connect to local strategies, was not fully taken into account, even though it was implicitly recognised by NUTI management. This meant that some of the initiatives were much more short lived than others, reducing their impact.

It should be recognised that the operation adopted a posture that was uniquely adapted to the environment and to the actors that were involved in and around northern Uganda. The results achieved would not have been achieved without the particular modalities that OTI has identified within USAID's broader tool box. It would also not have been achieved without the skills and dedication of the personnel that implemented the intervention.

The final analysis has to be that, in spite of efficiency deficits in certain areas, NUTI was highly relevant and timely, and that it was effective in achieving the required impact in very difficult circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for USAID Mission:

The evaluation team would list the following aspects of particular salience for the USAID Mission:

- USAID should consider retaining funding unallocated against any objective to launch new initiatives as funds become available, and more importantly as new opportunities or operational strengths or weaknesses emerge. This means that the objectives should not be too detailed, and targets should be allowed to emerge over time. That would allow programmes to respond to changing conditions even during implementation.
- Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) is a new approach developed by the agency through specific measures. NUTI offers useful guidance, particularly through periodic annual strategy review sessions that enable the reformulation of objectives. Carrying out these frequent structured real time assessments provides recognised feedback loops on performance, based on participatory discussions with staff at all levels, and based on a strong field presence and frequent visits to project sites. Applying this to CLA would increase the sense of what works and also does not, and to which reserves could be aligned, even during delivery of the programme.
- USAID should extend the use of the procedure of grants under contract, more generally services based contracts (where Government provides direction as to how the contractor will achieve specified objectives, Government assumes primary responsibility for program success, there is an emphasis on process, and greater flexibility in terms of contract requirements) rather than performance based contracts. This allows for the

selection of specific teams, and a direct involvement in the operation. It should be accompanied by high level commitment to having a presence in the field, and to allow senior staff to remain in contact continually with the populations.

- The evaluation considered the differences of culture between an OTI that is willing to start many initiatives and to learn from the failure of some, and on the other hand a USAID programming that relies extensively on secondary reporting and effectively limits staff's ability to spend extended periods of time in the field. This led us to conclude that it would be desirable for USAID to adopt more of this 'learning by doing', and send a clear message that staff should remain close to the field, and be willing to take risks. This risk taking should not have a negative impact on staff assessment – in fact quite the contrary, it should be considered a guarantee of better results.

Recommendations for OTI

The evaluation concludes that OTI delivered a strategically focused and timely programme at a critical phase in the history of northern Uganda. At the same time it would have been possible to achieve even broader outcomes by applying tighter feedback systems at the level of operational design.

- For OTI there should be the creation in Washington of a technical pool of personnel to support operations dealing with more specialist expertise. When large investments take place, contractors should be supported through short term inputs to ensure that they do not depend on external actors to define the resources required to achieve a particular goal. Construction engineering, and small enterprise would seem to be two sectors that emerge from the Uganda case.
- The M&E system should be revised to better integrate the monitors and the evaluators into the management. Two specific steps could be taken. The first would be to adopt a specific structure in the application of SRS and PPR exercises to give them an evaluative edge, in particular the definition of key drivers to be addressed in the external situation. Surveys should also be framed to respond to evaluative questions. The second step would be to employ evaluators earlier in the programme, deploying a smaller team (one internal and one external person) at mid-point, and allowing them to return no later than three months before the end. The two stage visit would ensure that the evaluation is more directly relevant to OTI programme management, while the visit could be designed to correspond to the appropriate methodology.²³
- The fourth recommendation would be to carry out specific analysis of the local strategies and coalitions that OTI could tap into to ensure that specific grants have the

²³ Such real time evaluation would have in practice a number of implications. It would take the form of yearly visits by evaluators that would work more particularly to frame the work in M&E and draw the implications of strategic assessments. These could be local personnel, which would reduce the cost, but the choice should be carefully discussed on the merits of the case. The visits would be accompanied by the development of tracer studies with specific groups of population (including participatory observation, focus groups, semi-structured interviews) based on specifically formulated and tested assumptions or working hypotheses that would inform the management of the programme. Each visit would last ten days, and at each stage would become increasingly autonomous, easy to organise, and less onerous for the programme staff.

greatest possible impact. This could be done by resurrecting the well tested OTI practice of generating project oversight groups, formed by community members and local government officials. These would be active coalitions that would have an interest in ensuring the continuity of the investments and in continuing to work together after the end of the grant.

APPENDICES

A. LIST OF PEOPLE MET

B. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

APPENDIX A: LIST OF PEOPLE MET

Name	Title	Organisation
Abalo, Aida	Former NUTI Programme Assistant	
Abbo, Evelyn	Manager	Radio Luo FM
Achan, Susan	PDO, Capacity Team	NUTI
Ajop, Petra	Agago Sub-Country Court Clerk	GOU
Akammo, Joyce	Program Officer	Danish Refugee Council
Alela, Gladys	Acting County Chief	Odek Sub-County
Alimo, Florence	Program Assistant Gulu	OTI
Amito, Peace	M&E Officer	NUTI
Aneek, Suzanne	PDO	NUTI
Apio, Caroline	Assistant PDO, Kitgum Team	NUTI
Apio, Sophia	Database manager	NUTI
Babirigae, Linda	Procurement Officer, truth Team	NUTI
Barkle, Bill	NUTI Operations Manager	Casals
Bech, Mette	Deputy Representative	DANIDA
Briggs, Jeanne	Team Leader Gulu	USAID
Cristoloveanu, Madalina	Program Manager	OTI-USAID
Carew, Jeremiah	Supervisory Program Officer	USAID
De Torrenté, Nicolas	Programme Manager	Danida
Dennis	STTA Engineer Pader	NUTI
Eckerson, David	Mission Director	USAID
Fernandez, Eduardo	Director	Casals & Associates - Dyncorp
Fredrick	STTA Engineer Pader	NUTI
Gadenya, Paul	JLOS, Judge	GOU
Gallagher, Kevin	Managing Director	COWI
Garson, Pido	LC III, Sub-country Chief Kitgum Matidi	GOU
Gattorn, John	Uganda Country Representative	OTI
Graber, Nicole	COTR, OTI	
Hirst, Joel	Country Representative	OTI-USAID
Jamidah, Charles		ULGA
Jenkins, Rob	OTI Director	OTI USAID

Name	Title	Organisation
Johnson, Omona	Director	Pol FM
Kiganda, Abdallah	Gulu District Chairperson	GOU
Kitama, Makmot	CAO, Gulu	GOU
Knudsen, Niels	Senior Adviser	Danish Refugee Council
Komakech, Gerald	Mission Engineer	USAID
Labeja, Eunice	Acting Coordinator	Gulu NGO Forum
Lakot, Nancy	PDO	NUTI
Lakot, Nanoy	Associate PDO	NUTI
Luku, Richard	Producer	NUMEC
Macot, Kitarra	Chairman	Gulu District
Malthew, Olobo	Odek Sub-Country LCIII	GOU
Mamula, Megan	Acting Africa Team Leader	OTi
Martin	STTA Engineer Kitgum	NUTI
Moberg, Marci	Training Coordinator	USAID
Monica	Assistant PDO, Truth Team	NUTI
Musinguzi, Raymond	Producer	NUMEC
Namuyanja, Jamidah	Communications Officer	ULGA
Nanami, Akiko	Representative	JICA
Nielsen, Kenneth	Country Representative	DANIDA
Obwoya, Patrick	Supervisor of Works	Gulu District Government
Oceng, Jimmy	Procurement Officer, Kitgum Team	NUTI
Odong, Geoffrey	Project Assistant SGP	Gulu District NGO Forum
Officials	Magistrate and others	Patongo Court
Oguti, Moses	Program Development Officer	NUTI
Okello, Moses	Senior Research & Advocacy Officer	RLP
Okello, Vincent	Resident Prosecutor, Kiryandongo	GOU
Oketa, Kenneth	Rt Hon. Prime Minister	Ker Kwaro Acholi
Okidi, Micah	Sub-County Chairman	Palwo Sub-County
Okii, Moses	Finance Manager	NUTI
Okot, Arthur	Secretary General	NUMEC
Okwera, Jane Anjom	Manager	Radio King
Olaa, Ambrose	Programme Management Specialist	USAID

Name	Title	Organisation
Olal, Andrew	Assistant District Engineer	Gulu District Government
Olanya, Sophia	Associate PDO	NUTI
Opolot, Charles	Director, Communications & Public Relations	ULGA
Otai, Charles	Pader Chief Administrative Officer	GOU
Owachi, Gerald	Post Conflict and Recovery Advisor	DfID
Oyella, Caroline Joan	PDO, Kitgum Team	NUTI
Pawla, Patricia	Sub-County Chief	Palwo Sub-County
Patricia	PDO, Truth Team	NUTI
Pilgaard, Mette Bech	First Secretary	DANIDA
Ribe, Astri	Civil Engineer	WSP Group
Rigby, John	Regional Team Leader, Africa	OTI USAID
Ronning, Michael	Democracy & Governance Director	USAID
Sofie	STTA Engineer	NUTI
Seki, Tetsuo	Chief Representative	JICA
Simbo, Andrew	Programme Manager	RLP
Weir, Nikki	Uganda COTR	OTI
Wilson, George	Program Manager	OTI-USAID
Willett, Amanda	NUTI Chief of Party	Casals & Associates - Dyncorp
Yaroch, Terah	Program Coordinator-Stabilization and Recovery	Casals & Associates - Dyncorp
Xavier Nsabagasani	US Mission	USAID

APPENDIX B: SCOPE OF WORK

INTRODUCTION

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives' (OTI) mission is to support U.S. foreign policy objectives by helping local partners advance peace and democracy in priority countries in crises. Seizing critical windows of opportunity, OTI works on the ground to provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance targeted at key political transition and stabilization needs.

BACKGROUND

OTI's program in Uganda commenced in 2008 and is scheduled for closeout on May 15, 2011. The overarching goal of the NUTI program is to support the transition of Northern Uganda from 22 years of civil war to peace and recovery by providing an enabling environment for the voluntary return of hundreds of thousands of displaced northern Ugandans through an increased confidence in their government and the ongoing transition.

In 2008, security improvements in areas that suffered during a decades-long conflict provided hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people with a chance to return to their homes and communities. The progress led to a new focus by both the Government of Uganda and the international community on providing a path to post-conflict development. Since that time, nearly all of northern Uganda's internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their home communities. The GOU and most donors say that 95 percent of the IDP population has returned.

NUTI's overall goal and country objectives were first articulated in OTI's initial country assessment for Uganda in February 2008 and re-assessed/refined in the program rationale (initial draft submitted June 2008) and the December 2009 SRS. Per the 2008 program rationale, this goal was to be achieved through three main interlocking objectives:

- Enhance the capacity of the Ugandan media, particularly in northern Uganda, to research, inform and report on issues relevant to peace, recovery and development.
- Increase the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of government through the delivery of targeted strategic interventions.
- Promote the transition through support of peace, justice and reconciliation activities.

These objectives were further refined at the SRS in December 2009 to (inter alia):

- "...abandon the 'sub-county approach' to infrastructure and outreach programs and adopt a new approach to the vetting and selection of small grant activities";
- "...seek out opportunities to work with local and national government in their own implementation of the PRDP plan";
- "...increase participation in and acceptance of the 2011 elections"; and,
- "...seek out opportunities to involve at-risk youth."

The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for the Uganda program, finalized in October 2008, established three interrelated and mutually-reinforcing levels of analysis for M&E: strategic, programmatic and project. The role of M&E at the strategic level was to assess on an ongoing basis whether NUTI's goal, objectives and assumptions still fit within this country's transitional context, as well as within USG strategic objectives and foreign policy imperatives. At the

program level, the focus of NUTI's M&E tools and practices narrowed from the overall political context in northern Uganda to NUTI's three country program objectives, enabling NUTI to focus in particular on whether the program's activities were in line with these objectives as well as with its priorities with regard to the key issues, geographic areas, actors, and tactics it choose to support. At the project level, NUTI intensively monitored projects during implementation and evaluated the projects at completion.

PURPOSE

OTI seeks an independent evaluation of its Uganda program. The nature of OTI's mandate, its overall program goal and its specific objectives in Uganda shall be a driving factor in the evaluation.

The evaluation shall document accomplishments, impacts and lessons learned, with the primary audiences being both OTI and the USAID/Uganda Mission. Although there is no formal handover of OTI activities to the Mission, the knowledge gained from NUTI's activities and operations in the northern region can provide valuable assistance to the Mission's northern program, the Northern Uganda Development of Enhanced Local Governance, Infrastructure, and Livelihoods Program (NUDEIL), which has been slowly building its capacity over the past year and will continue to work in many of the same sectors as NUTI through 2012. The evaluation shall discuss and analyze program performance and success but will also address opportunities missed or accomplishments that fell short of potential or expectations, as this information can be a useful tool in informing future USAID/Uganda programming after NUTI closes, particularly in the context of the Mission's implementation of the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). Part of the CDCS, Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA), specifically requires the use of a methodology to improve development efforts through increased coordination and collaboration, testing of promising new approaches, and adaptation of approaches when appropriate to improve effectiveness. The evaluation should take this effort into account when analyzing the evolution of NUTI's strategy and approach and should include these findings in its recommendations for the Mission.

The evaluation methodology and process shall address the questions outlined below:

Evaluation at the Higher Level of Strategic Approach (40% of the Report)

- Did OTI programming through NUTI reflect a fast, flexible and purposeful response to the complex dynamics of the transition in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda and seize key windows of opportunity to achieve program goals and objectives?
- To what extent did the program address its strategic objectives?
- How were NUTI's strategy and objectives initially developed, did they evolve over the lifespan of the program, and, if so, what motivated/influenced their evolution? For example, what led to the early focus on the lowest level of elected government in the target districts and was this choice revisited over the course of the program to measure relative effectiveness?
- Did NUTI programming and strategic objectives appropriately adapt to the pace and progress of the IDP return process and the evolving political situation in the region and the country?
- What was the relationship of NUTI's approach and activities to the Mission's objectives?
- How and how well were NUTI's activities coordinated at both the strategic and project levels with USAID and other donor programs in northern Uganda? What factors helped or hindered coordination?

- What lessons can be derived from the NUTI experience to inform USAID/Uganda on strategic approach and methodology after OTI departs Uganda, particularly with regards to district-level programming? To what extent are these lessons contingent upon OTI-specific operations and financial mechanisms, and are there aspects of the strategic approach and methodology that cannot be replicated for this reason?
- Are there lessons from NUTI's experience with staffing and procurement in the context of northern Uganda specifically and of post-conflict/transition environments more generally?
- Were there any adverse effects of the program's activities or implementation methodology on the economic and political situation in northern Uganda?
- Taken as a whole, what was NUTI's impact on northern Uganda?

Evaluation at the Level of Activities Under the Program Objectives (50% of the Report)

- Did individual activities (small grants and/or technical assistance) contribute to program objectives? How could activities more directly address programmatic priorities?
- What activities undertaken by the program were most/least valued by the local partners (communities, government, nongovernmental organizations)? Are there activities that local partners recommended that OTI was not able to initiate that should be considered in the Mission's future work in northern Uganda?
- How did the process of partner and government engagement impact individual activities? For example, were certain activities (or sectors) more or less conducive to government involvement than others? Did the success of certain activities (or sectors) hinge more critically on the level and quality of local government involvement than others? Did the level of local government involvement and/or the approach NUTI took toward local government evolve over the life of the program and, if so, what factors influenced this evolution?
- Were specific program implementation methodologies more or less effective in attainment of program objectives? How did OTI and partners adjust their implementation methodologies throughout the program? Were these adjustments appropriate and effective?
- What did NUTI did not address that it should have?
- Did the impact of NUTI activities differ between districts? If so, what were the distinguishing factors between districts or between the approaches NUTI took toward different districts?
- As NUTI received 1207 funds to support the justice sector in northern Uganda as part of the Mission's Community Law and Order Project, did the projects under this program help to increase the functionality of the justice sector in northern Uganda?
- Did the M&E conducted on the program effectively gauge impact? Did it function as an effective feedback loop to help the program learn and improve strategy and activities?

Evaluation at the Level of OTI's Mission Statement (10% of the report)

- Did the program support U.S. policy objectives?
- Did the program support the USAID Mission's strategy for northern Uganda?
- Did OTI's work reflect fast, flexible, short-term assistance targeted at key political and population transition and stabilization needs?
- Did the program adapt, as necessary, to ongoing developments/milestones relevant to the goal and objectives of the OTI program in Uganda?

* This list of questions is not inclusive of all evaluation aspects.

TEAM COMPOSITION

The required team composition is defined below. The positions are considered key personnel. Candidates for all positions shall possess fluent written and spoken English to prepare the written evaluation and present briefings.

A senior lead evaluator with experience designing, implementing, and evaluating activities in political transition/post-conflict programs and with specific knowledge of OTI-type programming. The senior lead evaluator will serve as the team leader and will be responsible for the field review, interviews, the draft and final evaluation reports, debriefs in Uganda for the USAID/Uganda Senior Leadership Team and for various audiences in Washington, DC, including any public events to share lessons learned from the Uganda program. The lead evaluator must also have knowledge of and experience in conducting evaluations in Uganda and preferably also in the greater East Africa region.

A senior evaluator with research and/or evaluation experience on post-conflict/fragile states. He/she should have knowledge of Uganda. Knowledge of OTI-type programming is preferred. The senior evaluator will support the team leader and participate in the field review, interviews, the draft and final evaluation reports, and debriefs in the field and in Washington, DC. The senior evaluator may also participate in any public events to share lessons learned from the Uganda program.

One mid-level evaluator with knowledge of USAID and research and/or evaluation experience on programming in transition and post-conflict/fragile states. He/she must be a Ugandan citizen; have familiarity with northern Uganda and knowledge of the Luo language is preferred.

Additional logistics:

- QED shall arrange and purchase all international and US travel;
- QED shall provide per diem (lodging and M&IE) for the evaluation team both in the U.S. and in Uganda;
- QED shall fund in-country air travel and ground transportation;
- QED will submit required documentation for country clearances, visas, etc.;
- QED and the evaluation team will work with OTI and implementing partners to arrange interviews and debriefs in Washington, DC and in Uganda.

TASKS

The scope of work is for the following tasks:

- Recruit and hire three evaluators (to be reviewed and cleared by OTI);
- Recruit and hire a local driver and a vehicle to transport the team in-country. The implementing partner, Casals and Associates, will help facilitate this.
- Arrange for the two senior evaluators to participate in a one-day OTI orientation and OTI database training in Washington, DC. The Contractor will ensure that the evaluation team utilizes OTI's Activity Database as one of its key sources of information to evaluate the program and draw out lessons learned to share with USAID/Uganda.
- Develop a method of evaluation (mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative, making use of previous studies, reports, maps, surveys and evaluations conducted by OTI, the contractor, and/or third parties) in consultation with the OTI Uganda Country Representative.

- Evaluate the performance and impact of the program through:
- A desk study and literature review of documentation on the OTI Uganda program, and a review of existing literature on topics related to IDP return and resettlement, development and media strengthening in post-conflict environments, and local governance capacity building, which must be conducted prior to the interviews and the field visit. OTI will provide all necessary documentation in its possession, primarily in electronic format.
- From Washington and prior to departure to field, interviews with current and former OTI staff, staff from the current and former implementing partners, Department of State and other USAID counterparts. The evaluators shall arrange interviews with the implementing partners directly; OTI will assist in scheduling interviews with USG counterparts. Names of interviewees will be provided by OTI.
- Field review, including interviews with OTI staff, US Mission, and other USG personnel as needed; current and former partners (implementing partners and local partners, including local government) and program beneficiaries at project sites where feasible. Responsibility for arranging the interviews lies with the evaluators, in conjunction with OTI and OTI's implementing partners. The OTI Uganda team and partners will provide a list of suggested contacts, with telephone and/or email information prior to arrival in country.
- Provide an out-briefing to the OTI Uganda team before departure, including recommendations on materials, reports, maps and other documentation should be handed over to the Mission upon NUTI's departure.
- In coordination with OTI, provide an out-briefing to the USAID/AFR Bureau and the US Mission in Uganda before departure, specifically focusing on the findings/recommendations for the Mission in relation to the CDCS and the CLA (mentioned in the Purpose section).
- Upon return to the US, provide an electronic draft report to OTI's senior leadership, Uganda team, and Program Office. The draft report should include findings, conclusions, recommendations and key lessons from the program (details on the report are presented below). The OTI Program Office will solicit feedback on the draft report and send to the evaluators.
- Provide a teleconference briefing to OTI's Senior Leadership, Africa team, and Program Office in Washington prior to completing final version of the report.
- Provide 30 color, bounded copies of the final evaluation report for public distribution to OTI's Uganda team and Program Office, incorporating feedback from OTI and the USAID/Uganda Mission where appropriate on the draft; provide an accompanying Power Point presentation.
- Submit the approved final evaluation report to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC).
- The Senior Evaluator will provide a final presentation in Washington on the final report to OTI and other identified USG staff.

DELIVERABLES

The contractor shall provide the following deliverables:

- A brief outline of the methodological approach for the evaluation. A draft approach is due at least one week prior to the field study.
- A proposed itinerary, schedule for interviews, and list of all logistical support needs for the field visit based on the desk review of documents and the grants database, proposed interview lists, and initial conversations with OTI and implementing partner staff

regarding the Uganda program. This deliverable shall be submitted to the OTI Program Office and Uganda Program Manager in Washington at least one week prior to departure to Uganda. Upon arrival in Uganda, any adjustments to the itinerary should be made after consultation with the OTI Uganda Country Representative.

- Provide an out-briefing to the OTI Uganda team before departure, including recommendations on materials, reports, maps and other documentation should be handed over to the Mission upon NUTI's departure.
- In coordination with OTI, provide an out-briefing to the USAID/AFR Bureau and the US Mission in Uganda before departure, specifically focusing on the findings/recommendations for the Mission in relation to the CDCS and the CLA (mentioned in the Purpose section).
- Draft of the evaluation report, not to exceed 30 pages single-sided with Times New Roman 12 point font, plus additional annexes (report and annexes to be submitted electronically). The evaluators will discuss the format of the report with the OTI Program Office and Uganda team. The report shall include photographs and/or other relevant media, which may be provided in electronic format when appropriate (to be taken by the evaluators and/or to be selected from OTI and partners' media collections). The following sections are recommended for the final report: Table of Contents, Acronyms, Executive Summary, Background (OTI's mission and general approach to programming, country context, etc.), Evaluation Objectives and Methodology, Literature Review, General Observations, Findings (answering the questions in this scope of work), Conclusions, and Recommendations to OTI. Accompanying the report should be a separate annex on Recommendations for the Mission. A due date for the draft evaluation report will be determined in consultation with the OTI Program Office and Uganda team.
- Provide a teleconference briefing to OTI's Senior Leadership, AFR team, and Program Office in Washington prior to completing final version of the report.
- The final evaluation report will be in English with delivery no later than two weeks after receipt of all comments from OTI on the first draft.
- A final Power Point presentation summarizing key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, must be submitted electronically at the same time as the final report. The date of the debrief to OTI and other USG staff will be agreed upon between OTI/Uganda Program Manager and the evaluation team.

The PowerPoint presentation and Final Evaluation Report should adhere to the USAID graphic standards identified at <http://www.usaid.gov/branding/acquisition.html>.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The Task Order period of performance is March 1, 2011 through June 15, 2011; exact dates for travel to the field will be determined following discussion between the OTI Uganda team and the evaluation team. A six-day work-week is approved for this Task Order.

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