



SUCCESS STORY

Ceremonies Mark Transition to Peacetime Governance



USAID/UGANDA

USAID/Uganda Mission Director David Eckerson thanks IDP camp commanders for their dedication and service.



The camp commander from the Opit IDP camp receives a goat as a token of appreciation.

In June 2008, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) began a program in Uganda to support the transition to peace in northern Uganda. The program's primary objectives are to:

1. Increase the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of Government through the delivery of targeted strategic interventions, and
2. Enhance the capacity of Ugandan media to research, inform, and report on issues relevant to peace, recovery, and development.

September 2008 – The negotiations between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda (GoU) that began in 2006 have given the people of northern Uganda a reason to hope for lasting peace.

Progress toward peace has prompted many people to return to their homes, leaving the overcrowded internally displaced persons (IDP) camps behind. However, in the districts that were most severely affected by the conflict, such as Gulu, many northern Ugandans remain in the camps, reluctant to return to their homes because of lingering concerns about security and the availability of services beyond the camps' boundaries.

To build public confidence in the ability of local government to provide community services, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) provided support for two ceremonies that marked the handover of public responsibilities from IDP camp leaders – or "camp commanders" – to elected local governments.

The ceremonies provided an opportunity for the Gulu District Government to honor more than 260 camp commanders for their work managing the IDP camps during the conflict. The events also marked the restoration of the traditional system of local governance and highlighted the government's responsibility for the future delivery of services such as education, health care, and security.

USAID/Uganda Mission Director David Eckerson spoke at the events and assured the people of northern Uganda that the U.S. Government will continue to support their country's transition to peace.

To acknowledge the work of the camp commanders, the GoU, with support from OTI, awarded each a certificate of appreciation and a goat, which are a prized source of sustenance and income in this agrarian region, as a thank you.