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Fast Facts

Country: Uganda

Duration: July 2009 to November 2012

Implementing UN Agencies: UNDP; WFP; WHO

Other Implementing Partners: Local Governments; World Vision; International Lifeline Fund; ACTED

Budget: \$3,914,194

Key Words: Post-conflict peace building; IDPs; community reconciliation; income-generation

BACKGROUND

During a span of twenty years, the war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda displaced approximately 1.5 million people and disrupted the livelihoods of communities in northern Uganda. This not only hampered social and economic development of the country, particularly in northern Uganda, but it also produced glaring regional disparities within the country. As an outcome of the peace agreement signed in August 2007, the return of

internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their areas of origin was a promising sign of the arrival of peace to northern Uganda. However, in spite of this development, insecurity in the region persisted as former IDPs were returning to areas with limited access to basic services and economic opportunities, thus exacerbating conflict over scarce resources and limiting the space towards long-term reconciliation and sustainable peace.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the Northern Uganda Early Recovery Project (NUERP) was to support the rapid and sustainable recovery of conflict-affected populations and their communities in the Lango sub-region in northern Uganda. In order to tackle various insecurities faced by returnees and their host communities, the project aimed to (i) facilitate the resettlement and recovery of the returnees through improvements in physical infrastructure and by

strengthening the organizational capacity of local governments in the areas of return; (ii) improve the production capacity of agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and their access to micro-finance; (iii) enhance the quality of and access to healthcare; (iv) improving access to safe water and sanitation facilities; and (v) allow returnees and IDPs to engage in peacebuilding and conflict prevention processes, involving women, youth, religious and local leaders.

BENEFICIARIES

The project targeted a total of 228,190 people in 16 counties in Lango. Direct beneficiaries included 8,000 households who received agricultural inputs and agronomic training; more than 123,000 people who received improved access to quality basic health

services; and 480 women and youth who were trained on mediation and reconciliation. Furthermore, entire communities benefited from reconciliation and peacebuilding activities, as well as community access roads and improved land management.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) The project established protective mechanisms combined with community capacity-building initiatives that encouraged beneficiaries to take active participation in improving their livelihoods and wellbeing. Inputs in the agricultural sector, including seeds distribution, product refinement and agricultural training resulted in higher yields. Together with the rehabilitation of roads, farmers gained better access to new markets in which they could sell their surplus, ultimately leading to an increase in their incomes. Meanwhile, the project promoted micro-finance activities and entrepreneurship and further strengthened the financial security of the beneficiaries. This empowered people to act on their own behalf and to transfer skills to others who faced similar insecurities.

(ii) One of the project's main achievements was the introduction of conflict resolution mechanisms through community-based 'peace rings.' Peace rings provided training in mediation skills, gender equality, conflict resolution and arbitration of legal disputes. Local community members found the peace rings to

be very welcoming, thereby creating a sense of empowerment and ownership over the means by which to solve conflicts at the community level. Peace rings, which were replicated in other villages outside of the project, greatly reduced the incidence of conflicts within and between communities.

(iii) The tripartite partnership between UNDP, WFP and WHO resulted in improved coordination as well as joint planning, delivery and monitoring of the project. This joint approach provided more concrete and sustainable benefits compared to traditional isolated means of planning and delivery. In addition, by forging partnerships between the communities, local Government and civil society, the project was instrumental in harmonizing expertise and benefiting from the comparative advantage of each of the participating entities. Subsequently, the project combined the expertise and the commitment of a broad network of people and, as a result, responded to the diverse needs of the participating communities in an effective and sustainable manner.

LESSONS LEARNED

With its focus on bottom-up empowerment, the project demonstrated the applicability of the human security approach as a mechanism to address complex challenges faced by communities in the aftermath of conflicts. In particular, the project demonstrated the added value of utilizing and building on local initiatives as a mechanism for replication and sustainability. Since interventions operated through local structures, such as, community leaders and local councils, and involved the communities in every aspect of the implementation, the project was able to

promote greater empowerment, community ownership and longer-term sustainability. As such, successful initiatives such as peace rings, improved milling and marketing skills, community-based micro-financing, to name a few, were being replicated in other communities which were not part of the project. Most importantly, the comprehensive and synergistic focus of the human security approach resulted in a combination of mutually reinforcing results that led to a greater sense of wellbeing and hope for the future.