

Project profile:

Addressing drivers of conflict in Uganda

Introduction

In 2021 Saferworld and TPO Uganda began working with regional organisations – Gulu Women’s Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G) in Northern Uganda, Karamoja Development Forum (KDF) in Karamoja, Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN) in West Nile and Rwenzori Information Centres Network (RIC-NET) in Western Uganda – on a two-year project that aims to contribute to more peaceful, secure and resilient communities by supporting communities, formal and informal authorities, and civil society to work together to build peace and resolve conflicts. The project will address four core conflict issues: competition over natural resources, the impact of refugee influxes, inadequate transitional justice processes and conflict during electoral processes.

Background

Uganda’s history has been characterised by problematic governance and violent struggles for power since independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. Despite holding elections, Uganda has no experience of the peaceful transfer of power from one government to another. The country’s economic growth has been unbalanced, with some regions and sections of society feeling the benefits much more than others. In different regions, past traumas have remained unaddressed and have triggered psychological distress, stigma, discrimination and gender-based violence, hindering peaceful coexistence among communities living in post-conflict Uganda.

The project was developed following analysis of Uganda’s conflict dynamics, past and present. The analysis indicated some of the main drivers of conflict that need to be addressed to maximise prospects for durable peace and development in Uganda. These are: 1) competition over natural resources, including land, minerals, oil and gas, made worse by the increasing impacts of climate change through droughts and flooding; 2) tension and conflict arising from influxes of refugees from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which create a strain on communities already facing shortages of resources and aid; 3) problems of transitional justice stemming from past conflicts that included serious human rights violations, sexual violence, widespread kidnappings and the pervasive use of child soldiers; and 4) tension and localised conflict in the run up to, during, and after local, regional and national elections.

Although more prominent in Karamoja, Northern and West Nile, unequal power relations and patriarchal gender norms across the four regions are causing gender inequalities and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Men tend to dominate all decision-making processes and have more rights to access and ownership of property compared to women. In the Northern and West Nile regions, our analysis revealed that distribution and ownership of land is only for men. This suggests that in these regions, men are given more power over women in terms of



Project location

Lamwo, Amuru and Nwoya (Northern Uganda)
Yumbe, Adjumani, Arua and Obongi (West Nile)
Moroto, Nakapiripit, Karenga and Amudat (Karamoja)
Kasese, Buliisa and Kikuube (Western Uganda/
Rwenzori region)

Donors

Government of Sweden through the Swedish Embassy in Uganda (SIDA)

Project budget

UGX 21,739,230,436

Project duration

24 months (2021 – 2023)

Partners

TPO Uganda, Gulu Women’s Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G), Karamoja Development Forum (KDF), Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN) Rwenzori Information Centres Network (RIC-NET)

Saferworld thematic areas

Security and justice, refugee responses, gender equality, electoral processes

Project approach

The project will work at the household, community, district and national levels to create tangible change for Ugandans. It also aims to influence local and national policy and decision makers to adopt effective and collaborative approaches to address the causes of conflict and to maximise prospects for peace.

- We will work with partners to support communities – including youth and women-led groups – to lead actions for change.
- At the regional and national level, we will work closely with civil society organisations (CSOs), the government, the private sector and international donors to bridge the gap between affected communities and decision-makers. We will use existing avenues and networks – such as the National Land Engagement Strategy (NES), the SDG16+ working group (which Saferworld currently chairs), and our links with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Office of the Prime Minister – to have a long-lasting impact.
- Together with our partner TPO Uganda we will pioneer a new approach in providing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to survivors of conflict and SGBV at the household and community levels. Through this initiative, we will provide survivors of conflict and SGBV with crucial support services that enable them to embark on a journey of healing for themselves, their families and communities.
- Together, we bring decades of combined experience in working with communities in conflict contexts on a range of issues. We believe that the way forward lies in change that is led and owned by communities.

Anticipated outcomes

- Communities (including women, youth, refugees, hosts and other marginalised groups) at risk of and/or affected by conflict in at least 14 districts are able to identify, prioritise, analyse, monitor and take action to respond to local conflict issues and their root causes, through existing and/or new community peacebuilding structures.
- Formal and informal authorities responsible for building peace, security, justice and psycho-social healing at local, district and national levels, consult more with communities on conflict issues, support community peacebuilding structures in responding to conflict issues, and incorporate community concerns (including issues affecting marginalised groups) into their responses.
- CSOs work together to influence relevant peace, security and justice processes and decision-making at district/regional and national levels, including donors and the private sector. CSOs connect them to communities' concerns and priorities; and advocate for them to incorporate conflict-sensitive practices into their activities and programmes.

Key activities

1. Conduct community level assessments and map existing community structures, community-based organisations and formal/informal authorities, including those providing mental health and psychosocial support in the four regions.
2. Identify or establish over 50 Community Action Groups (CAGs) in the project regions.
3. Train and mentor CAGs, including on mental health awareness and MHPSS referrals.
4. Arrange issue-based dialogues (within and between communities; and between community representatives and authorities to advocate for responses).
5. Organise community-level awareness raising meetings with CAGs on environmental protection, land acquisition procedures, land referral pathways and land rights.
6. Facilitate talking circles between community representatives and local government and relevant line ministries and authorities on natural resource and land governance, and human-wildlife conflicts.
7. Facilitate talking circles between refugees and host communities on peaceful co-existence and support CAGs in the implementation of action points from the talking circles.
8. Organise community-level awareness raising meetings with CAGs on refugee policies and relevant laws affecting refugees and host communities.
9. Conduct studies on current transitional justice issues being faced in communities where we work, how these issues interact with conflict dynamics, and the intersection between climate change, investment and conflict.
10. Promote peace messaging about community-level peaceful co-existence during the election period, for example by using community radio to broadcast in areas with high levels of inter-communal violence.
11. Undertake joint advocacy with the Transitional Justice Working Group on the enactment of the transitional justice law to address matters of jurisdiction and implementation of transitional justice policy and programmes.
12. Train district local governments, investors and other private sector players on topics such as conflict sensitive investment, conflict sensitive land acquisition processes and MHPSS, to develop relevant progressive policies.
13. Facilitate dialogue between the Uganda Investment Authority, relevant line ministries, local government and communities on natural resource governance and other pertinent conflict issues.
14. Develop a regional strategy for civil society organisation coordination, and support peer exchange and joint advocacy, including through advocacy small grants, bi-annual learning and experience sharing events for those involved in the project (as part of regional- and national-level programme advocacy and communication strategy development).

Photo: A community level assessment session with a women's focus group in Karamoja, Uganda. © Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives.

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