About Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS)

The Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS), a three member consortium that brings together International Alert, Refugee Law Project and Saferworld, was established to support the operationalisation of DFID’s commitment “to ensure that the programme does no harm, and that the overall process addresses the drivers of conflict and delivers tangible peacebuilding results” through ongoing audits and analysis of recovery-related interventions, with particular attention given to those that are DFID funded. The overall aim of ACCS is to assist DFID and partners in strengthening the potential of the PCDP and recovery process to address the causes of conflict and contribute to sustainable peace and stability.

ACCS consists of three broad components: (i) Monitoring of the extent to which interventions under the PRDP, particularly those funded by DFID, succeed or fail in achieving peacebuilding aims (led by International Alert); (ii) Contextual analysis of the overall recovery process (focusing on conflict indicators, issues and dynamics), and early warning as and when necessary (led by Refugee Law Project); and (iii) Evidence-based advocacy, targeted recommendations, and technical support to improve the recovery and peacebuilding impact of OPM and other PRDP stakeholders (led by Saferworld).
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<tr>
<td>ACCS</td>
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<td>AIDS</td>
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<td>OPD</td>
<td>Out Patient Department</td>
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<td>Office of the Prime Minister</td>
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<td>PCDP</td>
<td>Post Conflict Development Programme</td>
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<td>PPDA</td>
<td>Public Procurement Disposal of Public Assets Authority</td>
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<td>PRDP</td>
<td>Peace, Recovery and Development Plan</td>
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<td>UK PCDP</td>
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Acknowledgments:
The compilation of this report would have not been possible without the critical information from communities in Lango, Acholi and West Nile across Northern Uganda. We are deeply indebted to the communities for volunteering this information.

This report was compiled by Jackson Odong, ACCS Research and Advocacy Officer with invaluable input and review by Otim Denis Barnabas, ACCS Project Officer and Orach Godfrey Otobi, former ACCS Project Coordinator. The staff would like to acknowledge the technical and moral support offered by Chris Dolan, the Director of Refugee Law Project and Oola Stephen, the ACCS Coordinator and Head of Department – Research and Advocacy.

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1.0 Executive Summary:
Northern Uganda is one of the many regions in Uganda that has suffered from persistent armed conflicts. Notable ones have included the LRA war and the Karimojong cattle raids, both of which have left the regions’ livelihoods and very important infrastructure such as roads, health facilities, schools, and water points destroyed in the past twenty years or so. The impacts of such conflicts have been truly devastating, characterized by the displacement of over 1.8 million people into IDP camps, loss of lives, and abduction of estimated 30,000 – 60,000 children by the LRA to serve as child soldiers and forced wives.\(^1\) As it stands now, most people of northern Uganda have been able to return to their homes as a result of the relative peace brought about by various efforts and initiatives by different actors operating in the region with the most prominent being the 2006-2008 Juba peace talks.\(^2\)

There have been strong commitments both by GOU and donors to rebuilding the north. One such initiative is the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), a three-year stabilization framework designed by the government of Uganda as a strategy for eradicating poverty and improving the welfare of Northern Uganda. In this sense, PRDP provides an organizing frame for all interventions in Northern Uganda. It is also a tool for the Government of Uganda for the mobilization of resources from development partners for the recovery process and development of Northern Uganda.

In December 2009 the British Government approved a £100 million five year grant, under the Department for International Development (DfID), for a post-conflict development programme (PCDP) in northern Uganda. This programme seeks to contribute to the comprehensive post-conflict recovery and development process in northern Uganda, under the over-arching framework of the PRDP. The PCDP is designed to support the PRDP to: improve access to key basic services, especially health and education; reverse economic stagnation; tackle youth unemployment; tackle extreme poverty and vulnerability, and support national reconciliation and conflict resolution processes.

The Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS), a three member consortium that brings together International Alert, Refugee Law Project and Saferworld was established to support the operationalisation of DFID’s commitment “to ensure that the programme does no harm, and that the overall process addresses the drivers of conflict and delivers tangible peacebuilding results” through ongoing audits and analysis of recovery-related interventions, with particular attention given to those that are DFID funded. The overall aim of ACCS is assisting DFID and partners


\(^2\) The Juba peace talks initiated in June 2006 ended prematurely in November 2008 following the failure of the LRA to sign the final peace agreement even after successful negotiations and signing of six agenda items.
in strengthening the potential of the PCDP and recovery process to address the causes of conflict and contribute to sustainable peace and stability.

This report draws on the perspectives from various stakeholder dialogues on major conflict issues that are currently unfolding in the implementation of the PRDP. The documentation centered on articulation of; experiences, feelings and perceptions, the peacebuilding impacts of the PCDP/PRDP, key challenges, indicators and risk factors that are presently hampering or likely to jeopardize the recovery process in the future. It further looks at the current approaches and interventions particularly the extent to which they succeed or fail in realizing peacebuilding impacts.

1.1 Key Emerging Issues:

This report brings to the fore several conflict risk factors and indicators that, if not taken care of, could cause a setback to post-conflict development and peace recovery. These conflict risk factors have been evident in the health and education sector, economically, socially and politically. In summary, key findings includes: Poor quality and level of service delivery, inadequate processes of rebuilding and empowering the communities, increasing number of redundant youth and unemployment, lack of transparency and accountability seen in delays in the provision of social services, child labour and prostitution, lawlessness and reconciliation needs, specifically the need for accountability and community sensitization.

This report also highlights particular issues, prospects and challenges to post conflict recovery in the northern region. These include, resource based conflict, social and physical insecurity including conflicts in neighboring Congo and Southern Sudan, border control/smuggling and immigration issues leading to forced migration especially from Congo and Southern Sudan into Uganda. Others include; armed robbery (“boo kec”)

3 “Boo kec” is a Luo word loosing meaning “greens is bitter” but often used to describe bandits or people who benefit from chaos by looting others at gun point. For details see Sverker Finnström, “Living With Bad Surroundings”, 2008.
Furthermore, several interventions mostly under NUSAF2 have left the beneficiaries with more questions than answers regarding how to approach the question of selection criteria, bureaucracy, accountability, and value for money. Giving the local community a voice, this report therefore makes suggestions to the policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders on how to address conflict drivers using more appropriate means.

1.2 Recommendations:

The report finally concludes with recommendations to DfID, OPM, Local Government, and other stakeholders, in line with the opinions gathered from the people in Lango, Acholi and West Nile. In summary, they demand:

1. Active and meaningful community involvement and participation in monitoring PRDP implementation.
2. Inclusion of local government, and greater information sharing about PRDP by central government
3. Transparency and accountability especially from the district officials and contractors and other PRDP implementers
4. Close monitoring and ensuring value for money in all PRDP projects by all stakeholders,
5. Affirmative action for special groups such as PWDs, women, children, youth and the elderly, including respect of their concerns during recovery and post conflict development.
6. Ensuring functionality and operationalization of the already established projects especially in health and education sectors,
7. Increased support/facilitation mostly accommodation, transport and communication for the police, especially at the community level,
8. More support for community development and reconciliation initiatives under SO 4 and;
9. Revisit the PPDA Act, and all the relevant laws and policies that guide and inform the procurement process. To reduce on the bureaucracies, the long time in advertising for tenders and prequalification of contractors.
2.0 Introduction:
Conflict and fragility in Uganda need to be addressed in order to promote growth and reduce poverty in conflict-affected areas and across the country. In recognition of these challenges, the Government of Uganda (GOU) has collaborated with development partners to develop the PRDP – which covers 55 districts and 9 municipalities in the Greater North, all differently affected by LRA and Karimojong conflict. Given DfID’s strong institutional commitment to conflict-sensitive development and fulfilling statebuilding and peacebuilding objectives, International Alert, Refugee Law Project (RLP) and Saferworld, are working in an Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS) project with funding from DfID with an overall purpose of strengthening the ability of key stakeholders in the PCDP to effectively address the drivers of conflict and contribute to building peace. ACCS specific objectives include: (i) Monitoring of the extent to which interventions under the PRDP, particularly those funded by DfID, succeed or fail in achieving peacebuilding aims; (ii) Contextual analysis of the overall recovery process (focusing on conflict indicators, issues and dynamics), and early warning as and when necessary; and (iii) Evidence-based advocacy, targeted recommendations, and technical support to improve the recovery and peacebuilding impact of OPM and other PRDP stakeholders.

The PRDP, to which PCDP aligns itself, aims at achieving its goal by realizing four strategic objectives of: consolidation of state authority, rebuilding and empowering communities, revitalization of the economy, and peacebuilding and reconciliation. Under each of these strategic objectives, several interventions and initiatives are stipulated. The strategic objectives set up the terms for various specific interventions and initiatives for recovery and development of Northern Uganda. The first 3-year phase of the PRDP ended in June 2012. An extension for another 3 years to commence in July 2012 was approved at the 6th PMC meeting in December 2011. The extension to June 2015 coincides with the cycle of the first National Development Plan (NDP).

Northern Uganda, as defined by the PRDP encompasses the West Nile (North-Western) sub-region, Central North (Acholi and Lango) sub-regions and North-East (Karamoja, Teso and Elgon) sub-regions. These regions have been variously affected by the LRA and Karimojong raids, and lag significantly behind the rest of the country in terms of the indices for human development.

Community dialogues and contextual analysis were conducted over the period March-December 2011 in the three sub regions of Lango, Acholi and West Nile in a total of five (5) districts and eighteen (18) sub counties.

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5 For more details see the Uganda Human Development Report, 2007
2.1 Objectives:

The community dialogues are used as a research tool for contextual analysis of the overall recovery process where conflict risk factors, drivers, issues and dynamics are identified and adequately documented. These are also used as a platform for offering feedback and sharing information for projects being implemented with the aim of monitoring the peacebuilding impact of the recovery process in northern Uganda under the framework of PRDP/PCDP.

RLP’s community dialogue program is designed to offer a forum for community members to discuss issues relating to social economic reconstruction in the broad areas of security, governance, justice, restoration of infrastructure, economic development and social wellbeing in post-conflict northern Uganda. The program also works towards influencing and improving on the PCDP/PRDP implementation—especially those interventions and actions that may not be conflict sensitive. They are also designed to give participants an opportunity to brainstorm and strategize on possible solutions on the identified challenges facing the PCDP/PRDP in their communities and the Greater North as a whole.

2.2 Rationale:

Overall, community dialogues are rooted in the need of the communities to be heard and adequately represented. The community seemed to be rather voiceless and powerless in determining interventions and monitoring their effectiveness/responsiveness. Maintaining a vigilant focus on the conflict-sensitivity of interventions and peacebuilding impact of the recovery process in northern Uganda remains critical given the persistent and entrenched conflict dynamics present across the region, and the lack of a Final Peace Agreement to the LRA conflict.

Experiences around the world suggest that involvement and participation of communities in development plays a crucial role in conflict prevention, conflict management and post conflict reconstruction. Community dialogue enables people to connect, communicate, raise and attempt to address emerging conflicts, disputes and grievances. It is an important process and forum for community mobilization/outreach, public review, information sharing and education. Many dialogues have given voice to the affected community and continue to serve as a forum for witness and testimony, offering community members opportunity to articulate early warnings, causes and drivers of conflicts.

A number of issues threaten to jeopardise all efforts by the Government of Uganda to improve the living conditions of the people in Northern Uganda under several identified interventions and programs meant to re-build important local infrastructure and community empowerment for productive livelihoods in line with the PRDP’s goals.
While the PRDP has a results matrix that it uses to track the progress of initiatives and interventions, conflict-sensitivity was not mainstreamed into its design. In a bid to address this gap, RLP believes that community dialogues constitute an important platform for sharing information and getting feedback on conflict sensitivity and early warning.

2.3 Methodology:
Each dialogue primarily focused on the overall recovery programme across the entire north including areas bordering DRC and S. Sudan. Participants were encouraged to maintain an overview in terms of sub-regional considerations, giving special attention to their localities while submitting their opinions.

Each community dialogue involved engaging key stakeholders and members of the public in exploring various issues and topics relating to conflict indicators in the recovery process. Through the dialogue process participants were encouraged to focus on benefits of and concerns related to PRDP implementation in their sub counties as a whole, as well as in their parishes and villages in particular. They were asked to give attention to what had been implemented, observed and learned from past attempts to appraise and address such concerns and suggest new ways of solving them—all complemented by relevant reporting.

About 1260 participants (504 women) were mobilized through the established leadership structures – especially sub county chiefs and LCIII chairpersons from the sub counties of; Ngetta, Agali and Amach in Lira district; Orum and Adwari in Otuke district; Koch Ongako, Koro, Unyama, Piacho, Lalogi and Odek in Gulu district; Nyapea, Jangokoro and Zeu in Zombo district and; Erussi, Parombo, Nyaravur and Kucwiny in Nebbi district in the central north and Northwest. These were representative of all the interest groups in the community with emphasis laid on an inclusive, non-discriminatory and all-embracing participation and a well-balanced demographic mix.

The target group included; community leaders such as local councilors, traditional/cultural
leaders, religious leaders, opinion leaders, elders, teachers, health workers, sub-county chiefs, community development officers, NUSAf2 facilitators, parish chiefs, police officers, representatives of youth, women, PWD’s, VHTs and other marginalized groups and a broad range of ordinary citizens some of whom were “practical visionaries”\(^6\).

A participatory structured approach was employed in open air ‘town hall’ meetings. Each and every participant had an equal chance of voicing their opinions, share experiences, debate and bring the latest developments in their communities to the attention of their leaders.

A central venue (usually a public facility—health center, primary school or the sub county headquarters) was preferred provided it benefited from any PCDP/PRDP project for easy access, freedom of expression and visual learning. This was so, because it was important to have a visual aid so that those who may not have heard or seen any PRDP project would have a feel or an idea of what PRDP is doing in their communities.

Each dialogue was characterized by a precise introduction of ACCS, PCDP/DFID and PRDP. The dialogue programme structure, objective, purpose and expectations were clearly well-articulated. The dialogues were either opened or closed by the Chairperson LCI, health in-charge/head teacher, sub-county chief and Chairperson LCIII.

Competent note-takers, videographers, interpreters and community guides were identified to assist in (narrative and video) the documentation process, with a particular focus on addressing language challenges.

3.0 Emerging Issues:

Many districts in Northern Uganda are at different levels of PCDP/PRDP adoption and implementation, however, there are quite a number of shared experiences and opinions regarding PCDP/PRDP implementation as well as key challenges, indicators and conflict risk factors as discussed below.

3.1 PRDP Benefits vis-a-vis peacebuilding impacts:

“We have benefited from a twin staff house\(^7\), much as we were not consulted…but I appreciate the offer and we appeal for more involvement and active community participation.”\(^8\)

The road towards rebuilding and rehabilitating northern Uganda under PRDP began in 2009/10 FY. In its second year of implementation, PRDP went a long way in establishment of important infrastructure.

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\(^6\) The word “practical visionaries” is used to describe noble statesmen who have retired from active civil service but continue to organize community to address societal problems as well as volunteering their expertise and time in issues regarding community development.

\(^7\) “A twin staff house” refers to a building with two housing units each containing two bedrooms, sitting room and a kitchen/store meant to accommodate teaching staff and health workers.

\(^8\) Male head teacher of Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011
Completed projects ranged from staff houses, latrines, wards, fences, placenta pits, classroom blocks, office space, and desk supplies among others in schools, health centers, sub county headquarters as well as drilling of boreholes in many villages and opening of roads in various communities. One participant actually said, “PRDP is doing a lot and I must appreciate that, we have received schools, health centres, bore holes and now we are drinking clean water.”

In Lalogi Sub County, completed projects include; Classroom blocks in Awaikok P/S, Teachers house in Idobo P/S and Minja P/S, Staff house in Layo Ajonga HC II, Boreholes drilled in Awatlela, Parwech Parish and Agwari village, Gem Parish. One participant noted:

“Ongako health center III received 2 blocks for staff housing from PRDP, a fence which is still being put up and

renovation was to start soon and we are still waiting.”

3.2 Knowledge and Perceptions about PRDP:

Although 67% of participants had heard of PRDP, either on radio or in a meeting, they still had very little or no information regarding the progress and implementation of PRDP in their communities.

As the sessions began, it soon became evident in all the dialogues that awareness about financial input per Sub County—knowledge of what is planned, funded and accomplished; and differentiation of PRDP from other ongoing initiatives was limited. Most participants were unaware of the meaning of PRDP. One of the participants admitted in a statement that:

“When you asked whether we understand PRDP, I didn’t know what to say and if I was a community leader and I was asked that question, I would just sweat because I don’t know the meaning. And this is the first dialogue I have ever known and attended in this community.”

A section of the community still believes that PRDP is more of matter of hearsay than reality. They do not see or feel it in any way. This therefore affects the reception of PRDP in some communities besides it being

9 A Catechist and resident of Oryang village Erussi Sub County, Nebbi District – September 23, 2011

10 A health worker of Koch Ongako health center III in Gulu district– April 26, 2011

11 A male head teacher of Ongica village in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district – March 18, 2011
embraced and owned by the community. Some participants had the following to say:

“I think that PRDP is nothing but more of hearsay, because we have suffered a lot and there is still no peace in the community. PRDP has not incorporated the peace component in most of its programs and the community is not even informed about how to be peaceful”

Another participant repeated the same charge thus:

“I appreciate the work PRDP is doing, but often times I hear in meetings that some schools are going to benefit from PRDP but all that seems to be more of hearsay or stories. Besides they are now focusing on newly created schools and the mother schools have been ignored...”

3.3 Information and Awareness:

In all the dialogues, the community seemed disempowered and intimidated and their level of knowledge about the PDRP and its implementation rendered them unable to comment much on progress. One participant recognized:

“We have been seeing PRDP like a document that was written and thrown along the way that we had nothing to do with”

Others wondered what PRDP was actually doing or meant to do in their communities while some described the PDRP in elusive terms, one participant admitted in a statement that; “...We thought PRDP is like an elephant that is too big to be touched.”

Participants highlighted projects that stopped or stalled without any clear or satisfactory explanations especially to the local community and their leadership. The majority of participants raised concerns and questions as to why these projects stalled; one had the following to say:

“We were given a project under PRDP but all of a sudden, the project stopped and we don’t know why”

Similarly, although some community sensitization was being conducted on radio and in print media - especially by district officials, CSO’s, NGO’s and other government agencies - the effectiveness, efficiency and coverage of this outreach is questionable. Some participants wondered why community sensitization had come at this point after such a long period of time when the project operations started. One participant observed:

“We know that community sensitization has come now after such a long period of time; where have you people been and what have you been doing for so long?”

12 47 year old female participant in Koro Sub County, Gulu district – April 27, 2011
13 Female participant and teacher in Pakwelo in Unyama Sub County, Gulu district – May 10, 2011
14 An elder in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district – March 18, 2011
15 Above 60 year old community leader in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district – March 18, 2011
16 Female participant and head teacher in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district – March 18, 2011
doing? I hope you will come back again because we have really learnt a lot from you.”

3.4 Community Expectations of PRDP:

A wider section of the community has expectations of the PRDP which differ from what it is actually doing. Although PRDP has provided infrastructure such as roads, schools, and health centers, some community members expected the program to provide them with basic household items. Some participant had this to say:

“When we heard about PRDP, we had some expectations, that when PRDP comes, it would help rehabilitate people’s livelihoods. We thought it would help people at households address poverty, but many people have not been resettled, and many are still poor. Actually we never needed these structures or buildings as our priority because even if we had only one block in the health center with medicine, it would be doing something great.”

Another participant submitted:

“Why is that PRDP is not catering for young children, especially those with poor parents? Actually my request is that if some nursery schools could be initiated to offer a good foundation to our children, we would be happy.

Some members of the community believe that PRDP is meant to do everything. Some participants saw such beliefs as an extension of a humanitarian setting in which people are used to handouts. Others argue that this misconception is as a result of miscommunication by some political and community leaders. Although it could also mean an indication of a high demand for social services, the majority of locals feel that the funding is not benefiting the intended beneficiaries. A participant observed:

“The maternity ward lacks toilets; we share latrines with the community, there is no electricity here, which makes our work more difficult. We also don’t have a general ward for patients and the OPD is in a sorry state, so PRDP should actually step in fast…”

Some participants suggested more affirmative action for secondary and tertiary education, and one participant observed in what may be considered as an aspiration as well as an expectation;

“I am so grateful for what PRDP has done and all that it is continuing to do, we would love PRDP to start sponsoring our

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17 50 year old male and resident of Koro Sub County, Gulu district– April 27, 2011
18 A religious Leader from Ongica village in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011
19 A female participant and resident of Unyama, Gulu district– May 10, 2011
20 Ibid.
children in school especially secondary education.”

What could easily be observed as participants expressed their views was that the community understands a successful project as one that directly benefits them by providing them something tangible. High expectations were expressed in all the community dialogues. Some participants wondered why PRDP is not giving them material benefits, cash and individual packages. “It was said that tractors and cows would be given to people under PRDP but we have not yet seen anything up to now, why?” One of the participants’ asked.

Similarly, some people hold the view that PRDP should fulfill the needs of specific vulnerable groups like elders, children and youth. Some wondered why there are no specific programs for elders. A participant observed:

Why is PRDP not doing much to help the elderly; most of them are still helpless in camps with little or no support. What does PRDP really have in plan for them?

Several participants expressed similar sentiments about religious leaders in the following way:

“Why is it that the PRDP funds are not supporting religious leaders and yet they are supporting other groups?”

“If objective 4 of PRDP is ongoing, I am sure we have been doing PRDP work voluntarily. How then do we benefit from PRDP, at least we also need to be empowered whether through capacity building or any other way”.

The desire to have access to the projects under PRDP was evident in the comments of many participants. This can be interpreted as an indication of the level of need in the community and also as evidence of problems in program design. One participant had this to say:

“The maternity ward under construction is being done slowly and yet the community is really in need, why don’t they finish this project very fast and we start using it”.

3.5 Project Design:

Generally, the community observed unexplained inconsistencies in the implementation of PDRP interventions. While some interventions in health and education sectors included provision for toilets and bathing shelters, this was not true in all cases. Thus, community had a feeling

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21 A 62 year old male community elder in Koro Sub County, Gulu district– April 27, 2011
22 Male participant in Koro Sub County, Gulu district– April 27, 2011
23 A 75 year old resident and elder in Koro Sub County, Gulu district– April 27, 2011
24 A 64 year old elder and resident of Onigica village in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011
25 One of the religious leaders in Nyaravur Sub County, Nebbi district– September 30, 2011
26 An In-charge of a health center in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011
that PRDP or those implementing and doing construction work under PRDP in their community were isolating sanitation and hygiene facilities such as bathing shelters, toilets and latrines. They complained that staff houses, wards and classrooms are being established without any latrines and bathing shelters. “Where do they want us to bath from or help ourselves” one participant asked in one of the dialogues. A recommendation was raised by one participant as noted below:

“Some structures are put in health centers but without bathing shelters and latrines. It should be a reminder that for any staff house project that is planned for, it should be automatic that there is an inclusion of a bathing shelter and a latrine”

Another participant agreed:

“PRDP is doing good things in our community but the only problem is that it only plans for accommodation (staff houses) but ignores to construct latrines which are a very important component for healthy living”

3.6 Social and Physical Insecurity:

Interactions with the community revealed that, there are quite a number of challenges which affect the people’s state of livelihood strategies. Some of the key challenges highlighted were; increasing prices and declining value for money which has affected savings and consumption rates as well as access to basic services; poor road networks, high levels of unemployment amongst youths, limited involvement and participation of women in the planning of development programmes.

The communities decry the increasing number of redundant/idle and unemployed youth. To many this has resulted in; high alcohol consumption, early sex and prostitution, theft and robbery. ‘Boo Kec’ is the term given to a unique form of armed robbery orchestrated by young people who disguise themselves as “rebels”. This was particularly highlighted in most dialogues in the Acholi sub region. Some participants believe that there are still some guns within the community and that some former LRA fighters were not completely disarmed, a matter that needs to be checked as one participant opined:

“My appeal is that PRDP should embark on peace building because there are still elements of militarization especially in

27 A health worker in Paicho Sub County, Gulu district– May 19, 2011

28 A 32 year old health official in Koch Ongako Sub County, Gulu district– April 26, 2011
Gulu here, which is an indication that sustainable peace is not yet realized and above all religious leaders should also be involved in peacebuilding.29

Generally, the security situation still remains disturbing even if the guns have gone silent, with limited police presence at grassroots to keep law and order thereby increasing on the problem of lawlessness. These conflict issues and drivers, if not well handled, could reverse any progress already made in reconstructing northern Uganda.

3.7 Child Labour and Prostitution:
Child labour is seen to stem from the need to meet basic needs and particularly food/meals. A number of children have been subjected to farming/digging, babysitting, shop keeping and selling produce in the market, quarrying and generally participating in various activities. Even during school days, this continues to be a common practice in most villages across the entire north. Teachers have emphasised that parents must be informed about the value of education. The practice of using children especially below the age of 14 as a source of labour was mainly raised by community leaders who were unhappy about the practice but had little influence to change things. Elders believe that this is affecting the school enrolment which is said to be on an increase as a result of PRDP.

Child prostitution is becoming increasingly pronounced in West Nile. Paidah, the business centre of the region, is a place where this activity thrives. The motivation behind this illicit act is the biting level of poverty and the need to fend for a living. Some young girls are drawn into sex work by their mature counterparts, including those from the neighbouring DRC who find their way to the region for varied reasons. This has been widely condemned by community leaders who believe that this is an indication of a degeneration of morals and a huge impediment to peace recovery in families.

3.8 Challenges with NUSAF2:
The community made mention of NUSA F1 having been a project with a mixture of successes and failures. A number of them have been made aware of NUSAF2 which they perceive as a completely different project under the framework of PRDP. The reality of confusion in many, was exemplified by the participant who courageously asked; “Can you please tell me the difference between PRDP and NUSAF?”30

In Parwoo Central village for example, a number of people have benefitted from NUSAF2 but do not rule out the challenges faced. These included: the delays in the verification of projects; the long project form to be filled, delays in the release of funds. At this point, the community expect things to be done in an easy – to go way to enable them benefit from the post conflict recovery programmes.

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29 Religious leader in Koro Sub County, Gulu district–April 27, 2011
30 45 year old male participant in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011
Some participants had this to say:

“We don’t think it is necessary to have such a number of forms; it’s tedious. With NUSAF2, there are many forms that you need to photocopy and yet the project takes so long to yield results. Secondly, the money being given to people is not enough to support them. I don’t know why they are complicating issues, give people the projects”

Or again,

“The biggest problem with some government programmes is the need for documents and too much paper work. This takes a lot of time and access to projects is delayed. Filling some of these forms is so hard and that is why some of the programmes like NUSAF and NAADS did not succeed. The other thing is the selection criteria – which is not clear and [which is] segregative”

3.9 Quality and Level of Service Delivery:

The level of service delivery at community level still remains appalling, despite the programs/projects being implemented under PCDP/PRDP. While a number of projects in the sectors of health and education are appreciated by the community, their operationalization/functionality depends on vital software that varies from project to project in terms of adequate personnel; regular adequate drug supplies; regular stable school attendance; satisfactory furniture and laboratory equipment, most of which are lacking or limited in many communities. The majority of health centers are dysfunctional, and a number of schools lack basic equipment like sitting furniture, class room blocks, laboratories and adequate teaching staff. Those staff who are working have limited or no accommodation. Roads connecting communities to key health centers, schools, water points, trading centers and neighboring villages remain inaccessible especially during the rainy season. These serious obstacles to service delivery affect people’s perceptions of the peace ‘dividend’ and are a source of huge frustration in the affected communities.

Some participants were afraid that PRDP was coming to an end, without having delivered the expected benefits. A number of them were concerned about inadequate accommodation for health workers and teachers, inadequate staff, shortage of drugs, and poor staff attendance and punctuality, despite having some appreciation for what PRDP had achieved so far. They lamented that the above mentioned areas remained wanting, and one had this to say:

31 A female NUSAF2 community facilitator in Parombo Sub County, Nebbi district– September 24, 2011
32 A male resident of Parwoo central village in Parombo Sub County, Nebbi district– September 24, 2011
33 ‘Software’ is used to refer to all the required inputs that are necessary for the proper functioning and operationalization of any single project or interventions i.e. making it complete and useable.
“The problem with the health center is that, drugs are being supplied but there are no staffs. They are only 3 in total and sometimes you find that even the cleaner or security guard diagnose patients, more so even those 3 come late and leave as early as 11:00am.”

Although health workers are urged to attend work irrespective of whether there are sufficient drug stocks, absenteeism is a significant problem. This was evident to the ACCS-RLP team when a courtesy call was paid to one of the Health Centers in Gulu. The team found not a single member of staff present. One health worker bitterly remarked:

“We always come here but the community complains... now if you are a hunter and you go and hunt without a spear, then you will come back without anything; so we are like such hunters, if drugs are not there, how can the community expect us to help them. We receive drugs once in three month and when they are finished in a month there is nothing we can do. Like today, since we came here, we have done nothing but just sleeping. So we also need to be understood.”

Common issues raised across community dialogues, included concerns about pupils studying under trees or seated on the bare floor for lack of furniture in schools; no or dirty drinking water; poor roads and bridges with little or no attention given to their repair and maintenance.

On HIV/AIDS, the community was concerned about treatment and care for HIV/AIDS patients. The supply of ARVs is a problem. Some individuals from remote villages could no longer move long distances just to access these drugs. One participant said:

“My humble appeal to the concerned authorities is that more ARV’s should be supplied to the local community especially those deep in the villages who often find it hard to access these drugs.”

Security wise, the police play a critical role, but still face numerous challenges. Police do not feel motivated to offer their best in terms of service, leading communities to complain that; “for one to get help from the police, it’s very hard, unless you pay them something they don’t do much to help you…” This is reportedly occasioning an increase in cases of lawlessness, mob justice and delayed justice.

3.10 Resource-Based Conflicts: Struggle Over Land and Forest Resources

Land conflicts are a major threat to post-conflict recovery in Northern Uganda. Some analysts have repeatedly said that land is going to be the next war in the north after the LRA, an issue that calls for urgent attention.

In Zeu sub-county, Zombo district, for example, the issue of conflict over resources

34 53 year old local leader in Lapena Village, Gulu district– May 19, 2011
35 Female health official in Koch Ongako Sub County, Gulu district– April 26, 2011
36 Male participant in Koro Sub County, Gulu district– April 27, 2011
37 One of the female participant in Nyaravur Sub County, Nebbi district– September 30, 2011
like land and forest products was contributing to insecurity in the district. As one participant observed:

“The District as a whole is relatively peaceful with a few cases of insecurity but Zeu Sub-county where we are now, still has pending cases of insecurity emerging out of land issues with institutions like the community with NFA over Lendu forest, and communities with Mukwano group of companies over Abanga land being the two serious issues in fueling more problems”.

These issues were said to arise from the (mis)management of the Lendu plantation area which was exacerbating tensions, as noted by one participant:

“People feel that the Lendu forest has been robbed from them without people having gained from it, yet people had existed with the forest for long and this sparked conflict between the NFA and the locals hence people have retaliated by burning the forest during dry seasons”.

The public protests and local clashes between the NFA, LG and local communities (with the indigenous tribes living in the areas bordering the forest being the Alur, Lendu and Kebu) surrounding the Lendu forest are clear indicators of the prevailing conflict drivers, whose dynamics remain complex. Such unfolding dynamics include the exclusion of the locals from materially benefitting from the forest; bureaucracy in the licensing process; heavy deployment of soldiers; belief that NFA is earning a lot of money from the forests products and not compensating the community in the form of social cooperate responsibility; alleged brutality and sexual harassment of the locals; and child labour and abuse. All of these issues are connected to the dispute over land and forest resources. One participant summarized this in a statement:

“Just recently, there was a very serious conflict between NFA and the local people over the land issue where the community rose up against NFA accusing them of finishing their trees, having nowhere to cultivate, looking at NFA as foreigners who have come to exploit their resources yet not even allowing their women to pick firewood from the forest, and spraying herbicides on a few fields of farmers who had tried to cultivate in the forest.”

Zombo district local government now wants to use the provisions in the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act, 2003 to ask for the reclassification of the forest reserve. This is provided for in Article 16 (1) which states that:

“A local community, local council in the area in which a local forest

38 One of the district officials in Zombo district– August 9, 2011
39 An official from Life Concern, an NGO in Zombo district– August 8, 2011
40 A district official in Zombo district– August 9, 2011
reserve is situated or any person may, at any time in writing, request the Minister to review the status of a central forest reserve or a local forest reserve with the objective of seeking its reclassification as a local forest reserve or a central forest reserve respectively41.”

The conflict insensitivity of the different actors involved and their interventions have left worrying and devastating impacts on peoples livelihoods including trauma on the locals who for so long have been dependent on the forest plantation area (Lendu), strained relationships between local government leaders and NFA officials, lawlessness characterized by burning of trees due to anger and poor management of frustrations, drastic changes in weather patterns which are threatening food security in the region, destruction of road infrastructure by heavy trucks carrying logs with little investment on their repair and rehabilitation. All these issues make escalation of violence a real possibility.

The most urgent concern is the dispute over the acquisition, access and ownership of “Abanga farm land” in which Mukwano claims to have acquired over 3,700 acres which the community disapproves of. Already, nine clans of Pagei, Awora, Abanga, Jupakubi, Ayaka, Papoga, Alisi, Pakia and Andaciare are feeling the brunt of this fresh and ongoing conflict.

This situation calls for immediate and appropriate interventions that seek to mitigate, manage and ultimately resolve these growing tensions, which, in addition are greatly affecting several investment opportunities and implementation of a number of projects under PRDP as well as undermining the element of state legitimacy which, directly implies that PRDP strategic objective I is greeted with a lot of suspicion.

To address these conflict risk factors requires improved dialogue between the local government, local communities and the NFA, as well as Mukwano, in order to build confidence in the institutions and the positive nature of their intentions. It would be important in any discussion of conflict sensitivity today to ensure that the voices of all the people who are impacted upon by the current wave of conflicts are listened to.

4.0 Community’s Role and Response Mechanisms to Post-Conflict Reconstruction challenges:

The community being the target beneficiaries recognizes that they too have a role to play in the recovery process. This centers on planning, accountability, value for money audit, ownership, sustainability and post PCDP/PRDP maintenance strategies. This implies that they have to own the projects and take responsibility. For the peacebuilding impacts of PCDP/PRDP to be realized and its benefits sustained, the community affirms that

41 National Forestry and Tree Planting Act, 2003
they should also take responsibility in shaping the socio-economic situation of Northern Uganda. This commitment is through the following:

4.1 Sending children to school:
Much as government is responsible for effective and efficient delivery of social services, the community too has a role to play in enhancing proper service delivery; one such role is sending their children to school. It is important that the community understands that more classrooms are being built and desks supplied.

4.2 Liaison with leaders and establish channels for information sharing and redress:
In essence, community in dialogue with its leaders has to work together or complement each other in providing the required software to make the various PCDP/PRDP projects complete and functional.

If the community is concerned about projects not yet handed over as a result of delays in the payment of contractors or other unknown reasons, it must, through its established and recognized leadership structures, like local councils and Sub County, establish channels for information sharing and redress. The same applies to the uncompleted projects of the last FY(s). Thus, it’s vital to inform the community of the available avenues for redress: that is the channels and institutions that deal with these complaints.

Questions arise regarding the monitoring role of communities due to benefit from PCDP/PRDP construction works? And how should they approach contractors? One participants asked:

“What advice would you give us on how to follow up on the program, for instance on the construction of that health center along Paicho road; what should be our approach to contractors, what kind of questions should we ask; from whom should we seek for permission before visiting any construction site?”

It is important to understand how the local populace perceive the efforts being put in place, because people’s perceptions shape their attitudes towards development - in this case, the recovery process – and are also an important gauge of the quality of service delivery. Accordingly, the information that

42 Parish priest aged 56 and above in Unyama Sub County, Gulu district– May 10, 2011
the population receives about particular plans, programs, initiatives and projects then becomes crucial to their ownership of the whole recovery process.

4.3 Contributing resources:
As partners to development, and charged with the responsibility to make a contribution where needed in the recovery process, it is encouraging to note that some communities voluntarily contributed some resources such as land for the establishment of some PRDP projects. A case in point is Ongica Health Center III in Ngetta. As one participant said:

“When I came to this health center in 2007, I found the community struggling to expand the health center; they were holding several meetings trying to raise money for buying land and everyone was called upon to contribute about 500/= each. I joined them in that struggle and helped mobilized the community. Then the sub county chief told us a project was coming here but we waited till late last year that’s when PRDP came. It was even an elderly old man who volunteered land thought it was small, and we collected up to 1.7m to add its size and this project came.”

4.4 Participation in planning meetings
Consultation of community in regard to PRDP implementation is affected by the reality that a wide section of the community do not attend the local planning meetings either at Parish/village level or at the sub county. This is crucial for identification of community needs which the district often looks at when allocating PRDP projects. This poses a question on the most effective kind of consultation and how should it be conducted. Where projects are just planted in the community without them being informed or consulted, this has negative implications for ownership and sustainability of projects. A participant observed in the following way:

“My concern is the way they choose projects under PRDP, the community is never involved or even consulted and this affects the element of ownership of these projects.”

4.5 Monitoring value for money:
Community ought to understand that it is their constitutional mandate, role and duty to monitor the various projects in order to ensure quality and value for money. This would help curb the problem of use of wrong mixtures and theft of construction materials by porters, both of which often result in shoddy work.

During the open discussion, community did not go unchallenged by the facilitators and also some of the participants. The community was accused of neglecting to take a keen interest in project implementation, and the local leaders were also accused of sitting back and waiting until the project had been completed before issuing complaints. Furthermore, the sub county and district

43 39 year old female in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011

44 Male participant and head teacher aged 41 years in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011
leadership was also accused of withholding PRDP information. A participant lamented:

“It looked like we were not serious when the contractor was doing his work, the house constructed is like it had no verandah in its plan, and we don’t know the project detail since our leaders are also to blame because they wait till everything is complete and then they start to complain.”

5.0 Challenges/gaps in PRDP Implementation

5.1 Creation of new districts:
A number of the newly created districts such as Otuke and Zombo do not have adequate human and financial capital for successful implementation of PRDP. Thus, their finances are also channeled through the mother districts. A case in point is Otuke district which was just in the process of constituting its procurement unit and had all the PRDP projects for the last FY implemented by Lira.

5.2 Incomplete and un-commissioned projects
There remains a gap of incomplete projects while some are complete but, for unknown reasons, have yet to be commissioned and officially handed over. This has a bearing on the operations and maintenance of the project, often causing the community to believe that the project has been imposed on them or even to suspect that it is incomplete. As one participant observed:

“We don’t see any proper handover of projects under PRDP, for instance the staff house that you are seeing over there (while pointing at the house) has never been commissioned but we are already staying in it and in most cases, they give us these projects when they are incomplete like that one lacks door locks.”

Or again:

“There are some…still in the custody of contractors, for example, Unyama P7 School that was built by World Vision...”

Local communities have difficulties distinguishing normal government projects from PCDP/PRDP supported projects and others; they keep mixing up projects directly funded under PCDP/PRDP with those supported by the CSOs and NGOs, despite the fact they have different channels of reporting and implementation. Such confusions are attributed to poor information flow from the top district officials to people at the grassroots.

5.3 Contracts, Contractors and Shoddy work
A key issue of concern has continued to manifest is with respect to contractors. They

45 58 years old female health worker in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011
46 Female participant aged 41 years in Ngetta Sub County, Lira district– March 18, 2011
47 Ibid.
constitute the bulk of private sector practitioners involved in PRDP work, and they appear to have attitude problems. Besides shoddy work, participants complained that most contractors are rude and unapproachable, while some of them curtail or fence off the project sites in order to prevent the community from monitoring the progress of their work. The community expressed concerns that most contractors come with all their porters and construction materials, meaning they do not see economic benefits of such programmes to the communities in terms of income generation and employment creation. One participant submitted:

“My concern is that during construction work contractors don’t allow us the local people to participate in the construction work even as potters. They come with all their porters and sometimes fence the area so that we cannot monitor their work. I recommended that there should be a by-law enacted to protect the locals and requiring contractors to source potters from within the community were the project is found so that we can also benefit.”

The issue of shoddy work in most construction projects remains a huge challenge in all the sub counties visited, and requires a holistic and joint approach involving both the project implementers and beneficiaries. This has largely been blamed on mismanagement and misappropriation of PRDP funds in terms of bribery and negligence by both the monitoring team and locals. A participant pointedly declared:

“The construction work in Tongwiri primary school was halted because of shoddy work but the head teacher went ahead and acknowledged the work of the contractor and forwarded it for clearance at the district and yet work was not complete.”

One concern over construction work is the accusation that some contractors, after winning a tender then sub-contract it to another firm. This has exacerbated the issue of shoddy work. As one participant said,

“…at times, some contractors end up sub-contracting the project they applied for and end up not paying the

48 Male participant and resident of Koro Sub County, Gulu district– April 27, 2011
49 Male participant in Koch Ongako Sub County, Gulu district– April 26, 2011
sub-contractor who often demur from completing the work because they have not been paid”

5.4 Political Interference

Politicization of programs under PRDP has made it difficult for communities to appreciate PRDP as a genuine nonpartisan recovery and development framework in some districts. Participants accused some politicians of shifting PRDP benefits from the originally planned locations to their preferred localities or areas of interest as was the case in Ongako Sub County. Some politicians boast of being the brains behind PRDP projects that are being implemented in their communities. A participant commented:

“My concern is that some boreholes are drilled in the community but some politicians run around saying they are the ones who have donated or brought these projects to the community”

Or again:

“Some of our leaders when they get funding for drilling boreholes, they divert such benefits to their villages, instead of directing them to areas of critical need”

5.5 Neglect of Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

PRDP talks of Peace Recovery in its definition and about Peace Building and Reconciliation in its strategic objective four. This objective is believed to be fulfilled primarily by NGO’s and other development partners. The budget allocation for this SO 4 is meager as compared to the rest, that’s 2.70% ($16,404,995). What is interesting to note is that community perceives that the peace component is not emphasized let alone being prioritized. To the community, there are no clear initiatives towards peacebuilding. A participant observed:

“...We feel there is no connection between the houses and classrooms that PRDP is constructing and the peace it talks about.”

5.6 Geographical coverage

There is widespread confusion as to why the PRDP extends to districts outside Acholi and Lango sub regions which were the epicenter of the LRA war. Some elites in the community argue that the broader scope of the PRDP is the reason why PRDP is failing to fulfill its objectives and purpose since the same PRDP funds have to be thinly spread and shared among the many PRDP districts. Some participants raised questions such as; how big is “big north”? Which region or district deserves what percentage of funding? Is government was aware or sensitive of the

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50 One of the sub-county official in Erussi Sub County, Nebbi district— September 23, 2011
51 43 year old male participant in Koch Ongako Sub County, Gulu district— April 26, 2011
52 Male participant and resident of Pakwelo Parish, Angaya Village, Gulu district— April 26, 2011
53 Religious leader in Koro Sub County, Gulu district— April 27, 2011
conflict dynamics in the various PRDP districts?

There is therefore need for government to rethink on its budget allocations to the different PRDP districts in the north, giving priority to those districts that were adversely affected by conflict.

5.7 Border control and immigration issues

Some communities in West Nile are located at the border of either the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) or Southern Sudan. The unique case is that of Parombo Sub County bordering the DRC. Parombo has been characterised by increasing population influx from Congo due to conflict. This is putting strains on basic resources such as land and is exacerbating the problem of inadequate health centres and services to serve the populace. Concerns have been raised over the poor border control that is creating space for illegal and uncontrolled movement of people and goods (smuggling) in addition to suspicions of infiltration and trafficking of small fire arms.

6.0 Targeted Recommendations:

Participants’ recommendations for action to DFID, the Government of Uganda and other stakeholders especially at the district local government:

1. **Local Governments and NGOs involved in PRDP implementation should ensure active and meaningful community involvement and participation**, in the planning, programing, implementation and monitoring of the different projects/intervention aimed at peace recovery in the north. There is need for inclusion and information sharing, from the central government to the local government about PRDP with proper information flow right from the top down to the lower structures. This should also include sensitization of the community on the peacebuilding impacts of these projects through initiating PRDP focal point persons, “PRDP-facilitators” at community level. This could help create and raise awareness by disseminating PRDP information in the simplest terms possible. This should also involve peace education so as to encourage local community members to adopt peaceful principles in their daily lives.

2. **Office of the Prime Minister should enforce transparency and accountability**, especially from the district and contractors. All relevant information such as BOQs, budget details and the selection criteria (for the case of NUSAf2) should be made available to the beneficiaries at all times to enhance transparency and accountability. Identification of sub-projects such as engraving on the walls of projects being implemented in order to increase visibility and clarity and help in distinguishing projects under PCDP/PRDP from other normal government projects as well as
those of CSO’s and NGO’s for easy and proper monitoring and accountability

3. **The Central Government and Local Governments should ensure close monitoring/supervision** and ensuring value for money in all PRDP projects. There is need to streamline the monitoring function(s) and mechanisms of projects under PCDP/PRDP among the different stakeholders as well as involving the community (locals) in monitoring and supervision so as strengthen accountability and transparency.

4. **The Government should ensure affirmative action for special groups**, such as PWDs, women, children, youth and the elderly, including respect of their concerns. Projects with focus on livelihood support as well as establishing some critical and vital infrastructure targeting these minority groups, who are usually marginalized/vulnerable, should be prioritized by Government.

5. **The Government should ensure the functionality and operationalization** of the already established projects especially in health and education. Government, in a bid to check on the quality and level of service delivery, should provide relevant, adequate and timely software that makes these projects complete and fully functional.

6. **The Government through the parent Ministry should increase support/facilitation** mostly accommodation, transport and **communication**, for the police especially at the community level to be able to promptly and efficiently respond to situations that may arise as a result of lawlessness which may have the potential to turn violent and perhaps have a wider impact in the community.

7. **All stakeholder involved in implementing PRDP should increase support for community development and reconciliation initiatives**. There is need for more support for peacebuilding and reconciliation component if the overall objective of PRDP is to be realized. Different religious and cultural institutions should be adequately engaged to help address issues of child labour and prostitution, social insecurity, mob justice, witchcraft and other reconciliation needs.

8. **Revisit the PPDA Act, and all the relevant laws and policies** that guide and inform the procurement process so as to address issues of delays, bureaucracy, and all other challenges, including corruption that are resulting from the procurement process. It may be necessary to reduce on the amount of time and processes involved in prequalification and the terms and conditions for the management of contracts and contractors.

**7.0 Conclusion**

In the past few years, conflict sensitivity has become an important component in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. Even as Northern Uganda has cause to celebrate the relative peace attained and the
absence of active combat, more still desires to be accomplished, if a peaceful and vibrant north is to be a reality. There is still need for more targeted interventions in some critical areas for instance; scaling up efforts for poverty reduction, more affirmative action for secondary and tertiary education, targeted health interventions like reducing child mortality and effective disease control measures, address the challenge of access to HIV/AIDS services especially in deep villages or among the most vulnerable, if Uganda is to contribute to the realisation of the MDGs.

Sustainability strategies and plans should be a core component in the implementation of PCDP/PRDP so as to prepare the populace for post-PCDP/PRDP. Similarly, examining the current approaches and mediums for information sharing and dissemination is vital in addressing information deficits as well as enhancing information flow, community empowerment, inclusion and active & meaningful participation in the recovery process. In addition, the different risk factors, challenges and threats especially corruption, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, poor service delivery need to be greeted with the utmost urgency and attention it deserves if at all the peacebuilding impacts of PCDP/PRDP need to be maximised.
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