

Mission of the Centre for Basic Research

To generate and disseminate knowledge by conducting basic and applied research of social, economic and political significance to Uganda in particular and Africa in general, so as to influence policy, raise consciousness and improve quality of life.

**The Policy Dialogue on Food Security for Peace
in Northern Uganda**

Charity Kyomugisha

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Introductory Remarks by the Executive Director of Centre for Basic Research (CBR), Dr. Simon Rutabajuuka

The Executive Director told the participants that the Centre for Basic Research grew from a study group based at Makerere University and undertook its first project on Labour Studies. This kicked off a whole range of research undertakings on issues of socio-economic concern in terms of relationships that people enter into which affect their lives and the way they relate to one another. These relationships also affect the institutions that develop the power structures and systems of government.

He explained that CBR undertakes research on issues of basic social significance, documents materials on these issues, publishes research results, and liaises with institutions that broadly share similar objectives. CBR gets support from funding agencies such as the Ford Foundation, IDRC, UN Agencies, SIDA/SAREC, among others. CBR work is disseminated through seminars, workshops and the media. But the most important form in which work has been disseminated is through publications like working papers, which are published in that form or compiled into books. He also noted that CBR had made serious contribution to pastoralist issues in Karamoja, the Land Bill debate and, currently, the Conflict and Early Warning Systems project of IGAD that is ongoing.

Dr. Rutabajuuka also noted that this dialogue would build on work, which had been done over the years. He emphasized that it was timely for the Centre to actively involve itself in contributing to policy formulation processes through interaction with policy makers.

He observed that he was sure the dialogue would contribute to the ongoing research on peace and stability in Northern Uganda. He also said that the conflict in Northern Uganda is an enormous challenge that calls for interdisciplinary efforts since peace building could not occur through the use of one approach alone. Therefore, focusing on food security was one way to begin. He concluded by wishing the participants very fruitful deliberations.

The Food Security for Peace dialogue: A Justification

by Samson James Opolot

Mr. Opolot observed that the relevance of the dialogue was that missions to build and keep peace required more than a military force. After civil war and related political disasters, there was need for combined effort to make reconstruction possible. This is a multi dimensional task both in terms of the scale of required interventions and the nature of partnerships that need to come into force to ensure that correct actions take place at the right time and manner

and deliver intended outcomes, short of this, crisis areas such as Northern Uganda likely prone to relapse into violence and chaos in the long run. Additionally, a process of reconstruction should commence with multiple dialogues engaging a wide spectrum of stakeholders, the bulk of which should have relevance to the post - or near - post - conflict society in question.

He also noted that the dialogue was thematically inspired. It drew relevance from the negative consequences of the more than two-decade-long UPDF/LRA war on the welfare of people in Northern Uganda, and those of Acholi in particular. Women are often left to pick up the pieces of a region shattered by war because when peace comes, in most cases the men are gone! Under such conditions, a household may lack food because the sheer amount of work required to produce it is simply more than the women and children can do.

He argued that despite all the life-saving work performed by humanitarian agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP), establishing post-war food security in the long term requires assets and public services that only a legitimate system of central and local government can rebuild. It is essential to include the poor, and especially to build the public goods that can increase the productivity of agriculture. To rebuild agriculture and the food systems after conflict is not just a technical but also a political matter, and therefore a food policy research issue. In this case, research has to take into consideration the fact that for Government and many non-government institutions, extractive research is being superceded by investigation and analysis by local people themselves. Therefore, the methods being used are not just for local people to inform outsiders but for local people's analysis of their own conditions as well. He argued that this is important since proposed agriculture and food security interventions fit into community approaches to livelihood improvement and natural resource management.

Opolot cited the United Nations Development Programme goal of eradicating poverty and hunger where the member states, Uganda inclusive, had pledged to halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day by 2015. He questioned why we had to wait for a hunger crisis in Northern Uganda before acting and what would happen if WFP pulled out under the present conditions of obvious food insecurity. He added that the challenge for NEPAD, national governments and Regional Economic Communities was to move rapidly toward the implementation of Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) priorities. This goal required increased domestic and international resourced support and a consistent focus by African governments to achieve long-term tangible goals for agriculture. Therefore, albeit being initially focused on the crisis in Northern Uganda, the

dialogue had to be seen as a stepping-stone towards modalities for agricultural modernization and enhancing food security in Uganda as a whole.

He also referred to Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) which has agriculture and enhancing food security implied into all its four broad goals/pillars. He argued that for an agriculturally dependent economy like Uganda, all the above goals are inevitably inclined towards having a solid agriculture and food security policy. There is no doubt that Uganda needs a secure and well-governed political environment for its citizens to gainfully have a productive life. Yet, each conflict or post-conflict situation requires creative and quite different solutions, in that it is the reality on the ground to shape the responses.

He said the objectives of the dialogue were:

- To evolve a common position on the peace and security situation in Northern Uganda.
- To debate best approaches of technical, human and financial nature that are required to support agriculture and food security interventions.
- Agree on modalities for launching an agriculture and food security programme for Northern Uganda.
- To enhance capacities of Researchers and Academics to engage in policy dialogue.

Opolot further noted that in societies or communities going through a post-conflict or near-conflict resolution phase, there was need to concentrate reconstruction programmes on areas with high local participation levels as agriculture can be said to have. An agricultural revolution in Northern Uganda could ensure that there would be substantial local participation and contribution to the reconstruction effort through the availability of adequate and quality land for mechanized agricultural schemes, and cheap labour. Depending on the model of agriculture development used, agriculture and food security programmes would enhance local pride, revitalize a sense of community and improve the incomes and welfare of the beneficiary societies.

He added that the benefit of approaching reconstruction through a central source of livelihood such as agriculture averts the risk of adopting very expensive and sometimes wrong interventions that raise people's expectations to dangerously high levels, and as a result set the stage for disappointment, resentment and perhaps rejection or even opposition. Therefore, there was need for plans to be based on what was locally realistic and within the means of the local population to own up to and/or even advance further.

He also observed that the fact remained that any reconstruction programme required adequate resources. On the political and the reconstruction side, the government and its donors had to ensure that adequate resources were made available. He emphasized that rebuilding agriculture and other economic sectors required more than just a one-time investment and that it could be difficult to get aid donors to engage in long-term planning and financial requirements. The slow pace and low visibility of long-term projects can reduce donors' interests. He argued that donors had been reasonable and generous but the generosity had at times been misdirected because there was limited evidence of donor funds directly benefiting the peasant farmer in the country. He called for a commitment to provide adequate funding, while at the same time, ensuring more transparency and accountability for the manner in which donor funds were targeted and spent on actual beneficiary needs. For this to arise, both the government and donors had to acknowledge that physical and political reconstruction could not be separated.

Opolot also argued that Security had to be understood in a comprehensive way and therefore could not be pursued exclusively or even at the expense of other aspects. In general terms, after a conflict or more so when the conflict is not completely over the main aspiration of the people is for security -- security of life and property and for production and reproduction. He noted that all summed, however, neither security nor stability but peace was the final goal of any reconstruction process. For that matter, whereas security remained central to any post-conflict scenario, it had to be complemented with deliberate poverty reduction and welfare enhancing interventions such as avoiding vulnerability to hunger and dependence on relief food.

Finally Opolot he noted that the dialogue was also a capacity building event for Researchers and Academics to learn how to engage in policy dialogue. He observed that a major dilemma confronting Researchers and Academics was how to use their research findings to engage policy circles and thereby influence policy formulation. He noted that the dialogue would enable Researchers to share findings on Natural Resource Management, Conflict, Agriculture and Food Security in Uganda. On that note, he thanked the Conflict Resolution Unit of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael) for funding the capacity building event.

He concluded that conflict management literature was increasingly pointing to the limits of militarism and providing alternative proposals that aim to compliment militarism with programmes for tackling the destitution that abounds in conflict areas as sources of lasting solutions. As it were, poverty, disease and conflict did exacerbate each other in ways that could create cyclical conflict. Indeed, evidence suggested that the longest and most costly conflicts in

the world had occurred in poor countries of the world and had produced or orchestrated acute food insecurity and often led to complete dependence on food donations. Under such conditions, even when the guns fell silent, the deprivation could spark off new waves of society-wide or domestic-based conflicts, hence jeopardizing peace and reconstruction.

He noted that in spite of the collapse of peace talks in February 2005, there were signs that the Northern rebellion was scaling down as evidenced by the surrender of key LRA commanders. Given this glimpse of peace, opportunities to have UPDF provide security for agricultural schemes that intend to provide food self-sufficiency had become a serious possibility.

General Discussion

A participant observed that there was need to critically look into gender issues particularly because the women played a very crucial role in production of food and were also left to pick up the broken pieces of the war. She argued that there was need to focus more on such issues.

Another participant sought clarification on the issue of internal migration and how it had affected food production, causing certain demographic realignments and affecting food distribution and consumption as a result.

It was also noted that the North was only depending on food aid and there seemed to be on coordination to ensure that there was food. A number of questions were raised and these included: What plans are in place for food security while there is war and after the war? How coordinated are government efforts? Is it possible to enable the ferrying of food from food-rich areas to the areas with none? What is the food situation like in the camps and especially for those on the fringes of the camps? Are they any better off or are they engaged in productive activities, and what challenges are involved? Since there are no food reserves in the country, how is famine going to be checked? This participant argued that there was need to analyze the issue of food security in the North in the context of the general food security in the country and avoid handling it in isolation because it is a country-wide problem. It was also argued that there was need to analyze how the conflict in Northern Uganda had affected the traditional notions of food at a cultural level.

A participant noted that there seemed to be some mistrust of government programmes, for example, given the rumour that government was surveying the land in Northern Uganda for foreign investors. The mistrust was therefore likely to affect the acceptability of government programmes. What is the government doing about the issue of mistrust given that there were

programmes such as Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) operating in Northern Uganda?

It was also noted that there was need to build food security modelling – how do you connect the producers of food to national and international markets especially in a situation of peace when peasants involve themselves in production. In addition, there was also need to emphasize the impact of food insecurity at household level as well as community level and look at the linkages between them.

A participant questioned whether food security was a desirable aspect in military strategies. To what extent was the government interested in food security in an area where rebels were operating. Could we talk of food security in northern Uganda given the fragile nature of the area? Is it food security when the guns go silent or could food security stop the fighting?

It was argued by one of the participants that the mistrust in the North was perpetuated by the political elites who were advancing their own agenda. He emphasized that it is possible for production to be undertaken in a conflict situation. He added that according to a study he had carried out, the amount of money used in relief affairs was approximately US \$ 500million, and the land available for emergency production was about 2 million acres. He argued that if a family was given about 3 acres to use for production, the entire population would access about 600 acres of prepared and defended land, and that would cost the government approximately US \$ 150 million.

The Role and Challenges Faced by the UPDF in Promoting Policy and /or Implementing Programmes related to Food Security and Peace in Northern Uganda by Major Shaban Bantariza – UPDF Spokesman

Major Bantariza observed that the areas of Acholi and Lango had had a security problem at the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony who started as rebels fighting the current NRM government as early as 1988. The LRA later acquired support from the Sudanese government and had bases in Southern Sudan where they sprung up to try and launch attacks on Uganda. They, however, degenerated into terrorists when they started attacking innocent civilians in villages, abducting children and recruiting them into rebel ranks. He noted that because the terrorists main targets were unarmed members of the public and not military positions, people had had to live in camps for ease of provision of security by the military (UPDF) which had played a big role in neutralizing the LRA, with thousands being captured, abductees rescued and a lot of ammunition captured or recovered.

Bantariza added that the current situation was that the LRA means to wage war had diminished because the Sudanese government support stopped

after the 2002 protocol which allowed Ugandan troops to operate in Southern Sudan under the code name "Iron Fist". The result was that success had been achieved with thousands rescued, captured or surrendered. He, however, noted that part of the problem was the absence of a functioning authority in Southern Sudan. But with the signing of the Peace Agreement between the SPLA and the Sudan Government at the end of 2004, a lot was anticipated towards final solution to the LRA. He also noted that most of the LRA top commanders had been killed, others had surrendered, were no longer able to abduct civilians except a few groups which still able to ambush people especially women in distant garden areas and water points. However, UPDF was progressively stopping this terror in the rural villages.

He further noted that the Karamoja sub region had had some insecurity but this was mainly caused by the acquisition of guns geared towards cattle raids. However, this had made the problem worse because the warriors increased the raids and started other criminal acts such as ambushing vehicles, attacking military positions for arms, thus turning the region into an insecure one. The Karamajong, however, do not behave like rebels; they are just armed members of the public who are misguided. He noted that the government had made successful efforts to disarm them and had already recovered more than 600 rifles in the recent disarmament exercise. He also observed that the West Nile Region only had problems caused by the defunct West Nile Bank Front and the Uganda National Rescue Front I and II. Of recent, the People's Redemption Army (PRA) had been trying to establish base in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo without success. Scores of PRA collaborators and supporters in the region had been arrested.

Concerning the security situation vis a vis food, he noted that an insecure area would definitely suffer problems of food acquisition. In Acholi and Lango, where most populations were living in Internally Displaced People's Camps (IDPCs), food acquisition had been a problem because there was no substantial cultivation going on. The displaced people therefore had to rely on relief items supplied by the World Food Programmes (WFP). However, in Karamoja sub-region, cultivation of food was hindered by the unreliable rains, the population also depended on relief items as well as hunting and cattle products. He added that the security of the camps where food was distributed had to be beefed up because the LRA had collaborators who kept them informed on when food was being distributed. Therefore they could raid camps for the same food if security was not beefed up.

Additionally, Major Bantariza made the following observations about the security situation in the conflict area:

- In Acholi and Lango Sub-region, some displaced people are not registered by WFP. They are said to be “illegal” and are never supplied with food. These end up moving back to the villages in search of food and sometimes are met by the rebels who harm them. The UPDF is always on the alert to prevent such movements.
- Most people in the camps do not easily access water and firewood though there are provisions in the camps. They risk and go to the bushes in search for the same and are sometimes vulnerable to rebel attacks if prior information is not given to the army.
- Since some displaced people miss WFP allocations because of registration problems. They always want to cultivate their own food as well as crops for sale. UPDF then has to secure fields for safe cultivation but the village-to-village security is impracticable till the last LRA has been neutralized.
- Due to administrative and logistical problems, WFP sometimes delays to distribute food to the camps. This also calls for people to move out to the fields making them vulnerable to attacks.
- Most people in the camps are so impoverished that they cannot afford other basic needs such as salt and soap, which are not usually supplied by WFP. They then resort to selling some of the distributed food in order to buy such commodities. They end up with little or no food, and thus resorting to going to unprotected areas.
- The government through the Office of the Prime Minister and the World Bank has started a programme called Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) where communities are given funds and they decide on what to use them for. Some communities have chosen both subsistence and commercial farming. The UPDF has to ensure that such a project succeeds by providing security for land survey and actual cultivation but, of course, in the neighbourhood of the camps.
- Other programmes for large-scale farming to benefit returnees, i.e. former combatants who either surrendered or were captured, are still underway in the office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Disaster preparedness. The UPDF will be charged with security of the areas where such programmes will be carried out.

He concluded that the security situation in Northern Uganda has been fragile for a long time, impacting negatively on the social, political and economic ways of life of the region generally. He noted that the region would certainly see a great improvement not only in the security of food but also other factors of development such as roads, schools, health centers, businesses among others. He appealed to the other agencies of government, the international

community, and civil society to prepare to attend to the post-conflict needs of the people of which food is a very fundamental component.

Discussion

A participant raised concern over the divide between the North and the South especially in terms of levels of education and questioned whether we should not be talking about education for food security.

It was also observed that WFP was allocating food on the basis of households. This had resulted into parents marrying off young children to form other households in order to access more food. What was UPDF doing about such an issue? Additionally, why did UPDF ban the growing of cassava yet it provides a fall back position for the starving population? What can the UPDF do to provide protection for agriculture in the context of prolonged war?

A participant also observed that some camps were not recognized by WFP which forced the women to go out in search for food. How could these people be helped to disengage from donations? What mechanisms could be put in place to ensure that people did not necessarily have to live on handouts? What lessons could be learnt from China concerning how they overcame food insecurity? Was the department of Disaster Preparedness involved or was it only WFP, and what did this say about our state capacity?

It was also observed that in the past, conflict between the Sabinu and Karimajong were resolved through exchange of food for cattle. Is it possible to exchange food for guns among the Karimajong in order to facilitate the disarmament process?

Response

Maj. Bantariza informed the participants that the peace process was on through military operations and the Amnesty Law because LRA rebels who surrendered had been forgiven and integrated into community life. He also observed that there was no move whatsoever to deprive people of their land because the land policy was very clear and known to many people. There was a national Internally Displaced Persons Policy, which aimed at sending the population back into their villages after pacification. So far, 5 relocation centres had been identified three, of which are already occupied. He emphasized that there is no land redistribution programme by the government.

Concerning the ban of crops such as cassava, he noted that shrubs of cassava make a thicket which give the enemy cover and therefore this was done to ensure that the IDPs are not vulnerable to attack.

He added that sending the population back to the villages was a progressive process because there was need to resettle people in relatively secure environments since the enemy was highly mobile.

Maj. Bantariza also noted that there were some collaborators in the camps who informed the rebels about food distribution but the UPDF had intensified intelligence in order to capture infiltrators. However, the common people in the camps had trust in the UPDF except that the political leaders were interpreting security politically. He urged all the leaders to ensure that security was not politicized.

He agreed that it was possible to exchange food for guns in the case of the Karimajong but that this was only possible with those who rustled for food given that some of the Karimajong rustle cattle or sale.

He urged other government agencies to come in and give various types of support because the UPDF's job was to provide security of securities to enable individuals produce.

Food and Nutrition in the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA)

by Mr. Tom Mugisa

Mr. Mugisa observed that the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture was a holistic, strategic framework for eradicating poverty through multi-sectoral interventions enabling people to improve their agricultural based livelihoods in a sustainable manner. It also provided a set of principles upon which sectoral and inter-sectoral policies and investment plans were developed and implemented at central and local government levels with the following objectives:

- To increase incomes and improve quality of life of poor subsistence farmers.
- Improve household food security through the market including nutrition.
- Provide gainful employment.
- Promote sustainable use and management of the environment and natural resources.

He said PMA priority areas included:

- Agricultural research
- Agricultural advisory services
- Agricultural education

- Rural financial services
- Sustainable use and management of natural resources
- Agro-processing and marketing
- Physical rural infrastructure

He noted that PMA had had a number of achievements which included:

- Establishment of a multi-stakeholder technical sub-committee on Food and Nutrition security.
- Finalizing of Uganda's Food and Nutrition policy-approved by government in 2003.
- Are in the final stages of preparation of a national Food and Nutrition strategy and Bill.

He added that the principles of the Food and Nutrition Policy were:

- The right to food is a fundamental human right.
- Food is a national strategic resource.
- Policy is part of overall national development policy.
- It emphasizes cross cutting nature of food and nutrition.
- Mainstreaming gender and environmental issues and concerns.
- Uganda is supposed to meet international standards.

Mugisa also highlighted the Food and Nutrition Investment Plan priority areas as:

- Needs of the child in the womb, and in its first and second years.
- School-going children (6 - 12years).
- Internally displaced persons, refugees and other vulnerable groups.
- Needs of HIV/AIDS sufferers.
- Poor widows, orphans, female and child-headed households, adolescent mothers, victims of domestic abuse and people with disabilities.
- Cross-sectoral coordination and strategy implementation, and
- Progressive realization of the human right to food.

He noted at implementation arrangements at national level included the Uganda Food and Nutritional Council which would have 14 members, while at local government level, the existing multi-sectoral committees at the district, sub county and community levels would be used. He appealed to stakeholders to take advantage of the Food and Nutrition policy and strategy to end food

and nutrition insecurity in Uganda, and that the priority was policy advocacy, implementation of pro-poor interventions for empowerment, income generation and employment.

Discussion

A participant noted that it seemed the PMA wanted the population to remain subsistence farmers since it insisted that cultivation should be done without destroying the environment; and also seemed to be in agreement with the perception that Africa must conserve while Europe develops. What actual intervention was in place regarding this issue? What was the PMA doing to bring about change in attitudes of the educated people to agriculture?

A participant also questioned whether the IDP interventions were a permanent feature in the PMA. Why make them part of a process that was going to take long to implement? It was noted that the PMA seemed to talk about everything. For example, was the question of technology filtering down to the people a issue of research or a product of thinking about what should be done. He argued that there was need to investigate the micro-finance issue especially as far as peasants are concerned.

It was also noted that PMA seemed to encourage the farmers to grow crops, which they called marketable. Which crops, then, were not marketable?

Participants emphasized the importance of understanding the inherent contradictions between commoditisation of agriculture and food security and how markets have historically evolved.

A participant argued that PMA did not focus on means of production and post-harvest issues. Was Uganda condemned to the hand hoe? How many tractors were needed to maximize production in Uganda and how many were available? What was the lifetime of PMA and how much had it done in the time it had been in place? Were there links between PMA and the Social Security Sector?

Response

Mr. Mugisa noted that the Ministry of Agriculture had prepared a development plan to ensure that as we commercialize, we do not destroy the environment, which is beneficial for sustainable development. He added that the main focus of PMA was to make agriculture very attractive to the elite through provision of infrastructure such as roads, and by increasingly putting resources into the agricultural sector.

He also noted that research had been carried out concerning the technology issue and therefore it was not a matter of imagination.

Concerning micro finance for the peasants, he noted that the PMA ensured that the micro finance institutions had products which were relevant to the rural people. On the time frame of PMA, Mugisa noted that in 2001, it worked on institutional reforms to focus on the poor, and currently, a policy was being prepared for mechanization. He added that there was social involvement whereby; a partnership with Civil Society Organizations had been developed to ensure that all issues were addressed.

The Role of the National Planning Authority by *John B. Kavuma Kintu*

Mr. Kintu noted that the National Planning Authority (NPA) was the principal statutory agency for, management of national and decentralized development planning in Uganda. It was established by the Act of Parliament No. 15 of 2002. He added that it was established to answer the need for:

- A consistent, efficient, coordinated and integrated framework and system of managing national planning for development and service delivery.
- A central forum for participatory development planning through sharing of ideas by different stakeholders and agreeing on courses of action.
- Ensuring that individual development plans are formulated, implemented, monitored and are focused towards the national vision.

Kintu also noted that NPA was established with a mandate to put in place, operationalise, oversee, manage, supervise, monitor, evaluate and coordinate the national framework, systems and strategies for cost-effective and participatory national development planning in Uganda, and had the following objectives:

- To produce comprehensive and integrated development plans for the country elaborated in terms of the perspective vision, long-term and medium-term plans.
- To ensure coordination and harmonization of development planning in Uganda with the purpose of, among others, eliminating and avoiding duplication of functions in various sectors, and to create the necessary and desired impact.
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of development programmes and performance of the Ugandan economy.
- To advise the president on policies and strategies for the development of the country, which involves examining the various development path

options and advising accordingly. It also involves making recommendations for new strategies or review of existing ones.

- To develop local capacity for national planning, and also provide support and guidance to the national and local bodies responsible for the decentralized planning process.

He informed the participants there was a proposed Comprehensive National Development Planning Framework (CNDPF) within which national development priorities would be best analyzed, planned, financed, implemented, monitored and evaluated in a visionary, integrated, focused and cost effective manner. He added that the key elements of the CNDPF included:

- Developing and sustaining planning as a discipline.
- Having a national vision policy.
- Achieving consensus on the development philosophy.
- Direct involvement of top leadership in national priority decision-making.
- Periodically and participatorily formulating and preparing hierarchical national development plans.
- Harmonizing the function of managing the development budget and that of managing the recurrent budget.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation with clear targets, indicators and supported by determination, commitment and appropriate mechanisms.
- Effectively utilizing technological developments.
- Efficient human resource planning and development, and service delivery.

Discussion

A number of questions were raised regarding what NPA actually does . The questions included: What actual mandate does the Authority have? In what context is the NPA coming in and what kind of data is available for use by the Authority?

Response

Kintu noted that with the introduction of the Planning Authority, government was intervening strategically, and it was not a “one fix fits all” kind of scenario. He added that the mandate of NPA was to coordinate planning.

Regarding reliability of data, he noted that it was a challenge but the Authority tried to supplement the findings by doing their own research. However, he noted that the Authority relied on official government statistics.

Partnership for Oilseed Production and Processing (POPP): An Economic Growth Cluster for Eastern and Northern Uganda

by Mr. John Elem; Mukwano Industries

Mr. Elem noted that this was a development approach for wealth creation that resulted in prosperity, poverty reduction and increase in social equity and is as a result of the coordinated efforts of private and public sector leaders who cooperated to achieve economic growth. He added that competitiveness demanded:

- Increasing the productivity with which Uganda deploys resources in key business sectors – the sectors that can create wealth for its citizens.
- Targeting sectors that can compete strategically to “win “ in target markets.
- Introducing innovation.
- Supporting the ability of the public sector institutions to respond to business requirements.
- Asking and answering such questions as “where and how best can we compete?”

He, however, noted that Uganda’s sub-sector had a number of challenges which included:

- Increasing productivity to obtain volumes that have meaning in markets.
- Restructuring supply to market chains.
- Introducing sustainable approaches to producer organizations.
- Designing and planning from market rather than constraint perspective.

Elem also noted Uganda is a net importer of vegetable oils, has two growing seasons and existing production of sunflower, soybean, maize, cotton, sesame, ground nuts etc. However, the processing industry was inefficient – large processors had inadequate amounts throughout while the small processors could not produce refined oils. This is because the production volumes were too low to support efficient production. He noted that given the inefficiencies throughout the supply to the market chain, transformation of the oil seed sub- sector into competitiveness required special approaches.

He noted that the fastest approach to competitive positioning was to develop a cluster, which was a partnership of actors having a stake in the economic development of a specific geographic zone through oil seed production. There was need to anchor the cluster partnership with market-linked private sector companies having the ability to guarantee market access. It was also necessary for there to be the willingness to invest in sustainable production and the vision to build for the future; use an anchor investor, in this case, Mukwano Industries, to put the model in place with sun flower seed, and add other sponsors and investors as the project moved into other phases and areas.

Elem gave the characteristics of the POPP model as:

- A partnership of public and private sector leaders anchored by Uganda's largest, diversified manufacturer and retailer of edible oil and consumer products. (Mukwano Industries).
- It is long term and in phases of three years.
- Phase one is expected to take five years beginning in Apach, Masindi, Lira and Sironko districts.
- Will later move to Pader, Kitgum and Gulu.
- It develops and implements oil seed production and processing partnerships that position Uganda to respond to domestic, regional and international markets.
- Targets oilseed areas where economic development has largely been stalled and where education, health and food security are major issues for smallholder farmers who use subsistence farming practices and live life on the edge.
- Sets up partnerships between the producer and processor through which thousands of smallholder farmers can realize the benefits of economic participation.
- Builds the efficient production to market supply chains that must be in place for competitiveness and export-led growth.
- Builds on proven methodologies put into place by Mukwano to establish a firm foundation for agro-industrialization, value addition and export- led growth.

The longer-term economic benefits include:

- Investment valued at a minimum of US \$ 135million in rural farming, equipment and manufacturing facilities over 20 years.
- 392,500 acres of land in operation based on viable strategies for product diversification and sustainable farming.

- 650,000 on land and off-farm jobs.
- New, value-added products such as animal feds, fortified blended foods, energy drinks, organic soy foods and castor oil – for domestic use and export.
- Partnerships among foreign and Ugandan firms and the Government of Uganda that support Uganda’s ability to compete in target markets.
- Sustainable smallholder-owned and operated companies that bring new economic life to rural areas and support extension of financial and community services.
- “Farming as a business” practices that lead to food and family security in targeted areas.

He mentioned and sustainable production centres as being:

- 5 in Masindi District, 7 in Apach, 3 in Lira and 2 in Sironko.
- Each centre consists of five production units and a bulking center.
- Each centre serves between 1,250 and 1,500 smallholder farmers; first phase involves around 25,000 farmers.
- Farmers operate with guaranteed market under terms of forward buying contracts.
- Centres produce and bulk 70,000 tonnes of sunflower seeds for delivery to the processing plant.
- Centres are incorporated as not-for- profit companies, owned and managed by the farmers

The rural buying centres are:

- One per district.
- Operate as for-profit companies, jointly owned by sponsoring firms and affiliated to sustainable production centres.
- Provide services to affiliated centres
- Establish and operate supply shops
- Provide intermediation points for flow of other services e.g. financial.

He noted that the next steps in the programme include:

- Expanding cluster participation.
- Identifying product and market opportunities for the next phases.

- Recruiting foreign partners to form the Global Development Alliance.

Discussion

It was observed that most seeds were not re-plantable and therefore only beneficial to commercial farmers. What was Mukwano Industries doing about this? Had it tried to work with National Agricultural Research Organization to develop a variety of crops with a shorter gestation period which would be produced in more seasons than the usual two? Also asked was whether Mukwano Industries had carried out an assessment of the hybrid sunflower and what negative impact it had on human consumption, the soils and the environment.

Regarding the use of herbicides, a participant noted with concern that scientific research showed that there was a possibility of unleashing untold effects on life and the environment. What is Mukwano Industries doing to avert all these effects and to ensure that there were no threats to human life and the environment?

Response

Mr. Elem noted that given the crop seasons in the country, a crop which grew in less than two months might not be high yielding though this had not been scientifically proven. He added that some of the improved seeds were indeed re-plantable, for example Kawanda composite maize.

Regarding hybrids, he informed the participants that they were better in performance and on high demand by the farmers. He also noted that the only implications of hybrids were that they were more expensive than composites and cannot be replanted.

Security and Production Programme (SPP) *by Namara Rwomushana*

Ms. Rwomushana presented the programmes as a strategic plan for solving the insecurity in the Acholi Region through beefing up local defence by use of community youth volunteers who are recruited and trained specifically to secure production areas in which they live. These would be trained by the UPDF and supervised by the Uganda Police under the community-policing programme. She added that the programme was aimed at reducing the workload of the UPDF so that they could be able to concentrate on fighting the rebellion. It was also aimed at bringing back other social economic services which had been pulled back, leaving only the UPDF to operate in the

countryside and a host of NGOs in the town centres. She added that it was also aimed at allowing the population to produce their own food and break the dependence on food aid. She emphasized that providing security through cultivation of land surrounding the camp was the only practical solution for the current food and security crisis in the region.

She gave a background to the LRA rebellion and highlighted the factors that had perpetuated the insurgency as:

- NRA mistakes which were committed by the 35th battalion mainly composed of former FEDEMU fighters who committed atrocities against the population which tarnished the otherwise unblemished track record of the NRA.
- The government underestimated the challenges that awaited them in the North in the early stages of the conflict.
- There were social implications of the former armies like the UNLA which resulted into redundancy. Also, between 1986 – 87, the Acholi peasants had provided livestock to UPDA and expected compensation after victory which never came leading to an insurgency. The Karimajong took advantage of this and rustled cattle, which created an alternative way of life of looting and plundering.
- Downsizing the UPDF and the Sudan factor. The reduction created gaps in the NRA's deployment to contain LRA who were then being trained and equipped and had operational bases in Southern Sudan.
- Under-funding of the Ministry of Defence.
- The Congo Conflict.

She gave a number of reasons of using the SPP as a security solution as:

- Historically, the North was used by the colonialists in a divide and rule policy as a source of military personnel. The negative consequence of this was that the North was not developed as an economically productive region. However, the trend can be changed now because it is an area where large areas of land remain unutilized, making it possible to carry out mechanized agriculture.
- The project will go a long way in winning the hearts and minds of the population, LRA will be isolated and they will lose sympathy with the population.
- In addition to producing food for home food security, it will be possible to attain surplus volumes for sale to generate income.

- Through provision of information about availability of produce in Acholi region, agro-processors will be attracted into the area.
- It will be easier to plan other social services such as water, education, health, road networks, law and order.

Regarding implementation, she noted that the programme would be a transitional social economic programme, aimed at creating better living conditions for people living in internally displaced people's camps and was designed to cover an estimated population of 800,000 people currently staying in congested camps in the three districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader. The project intervention would be to make use of the communally owned land system predominant in Northern Uganda, as well as government land to create farms called Security and Production Units (SPUs). Farmers would grow maize, upland rice, sorghum and beans, and SPP would make it possible for families to acquire means of production by clearing land, providing farming inputs like seeds, implements and agricultural extension. The project would be run on a cooperative basis, drawing experience from Israel's Kibbutzim and Moshavim system which worked effectively for strategic defensive purposes and at the same time providing over 70% of Israel's food output.

She concluded by giving a justification for the proposed interventions and noted that Rural Northern Uganda was the poorest region in the country, the main cause being persistent insecurity. Population congestion had further aggravated the food situation of the people living in camps and this had led to an estimated 800,000 people relying on food aid.

Farmers needed to live and work near the block farm, making a project a starting point for the provision of other social and economic services. The project together with the district authorities and the local community would identify land and allocate it to SPUs. Locally formed SPU committees would divide the land into equal size plots for allocation to each household. This project would be run by a government project implementation unit which would have all membership of all participating line ministries while the Ministry of Defence together with District Authorities and the local community would be responsible for planning the location of SPUs.

Discussion

A participant asked how much the local people from Northern Uganda had been involved in participating in these programmes, and if not involved in the planning and execution, what was the acceptability like? What had the programme done to allay fears about land in the North?

It was noted that the SPP programme is a good way forward and should indeed apply to other areas of Uganda as well. Additionally, given that there were many redundant youth, this could be a solution to the problem.

Response

Namara argued that the fears on land grabbing were baseless, but as a result of misinformation by the politicians who were misleading the population. She added that the people in the North are ready to produce in order to get a variety. Even if they were getting food aid, they were only accessing the basics, which were in most cases were not enough to go round. She noted that the local people were involved and aware of the benefits of mechanization of agriculture because it was not a new thing in the North.

Piloting a Farmer Assisted Agricultural Project

by Lt. Col. Francis Achoka Ongom

Lt. Col. Achoka observed that the idea of mass food production had been pursued since 1996 and in the process they had developed proposals which were continually being improved and modified. This was in the hope that policy-making about security in Northern Uganda could consider the fact that food security and income generation were a big part of solving the insurgency in the region. He noted that other independent researchers such as the International Crisis Group agreed with the project on a number of intervention areas and recognize, the following:

- i) Creating an opportunity for some rebel commanders to come out of the bush through incentives, legislation and negotiation.
- ii) Getting rid of corruption in the army especially in procurement and ghost soldiers.
- iii) Strengthening the command and the ability of the UPDF to effectively defend the population.
- iv) Resolving conflicts in Southern Sudan.
- v) Integration of Acholi into the rest of Uganda (creating a spirit of nationalism across the region).
- vi) Reconstruction of infrastructure and housing which has been destroyed during the insurgency.
- vii) Income generation through agriculture and other activities to be implemented after the conflict.
- viii) Returning the population back to the countryside as security improves.

ix) Improving the human conditions in the IDP camps.

He observed that tackling the issues which directly affected the people whose source of income and food security was agriculture had continued to elude the decision makers. He therefore suggested that there was need to use the private sector which had continued to operate despite the war to spearhead an agricultural revolution. Through creating a working arrangement between the private commercial farmers, the peasants and the government, a pilot project could be created and later replicated to demonstrate that food production and income generation could be a precursor to ending the war.

Existing commercial farmers needed to be identified so that they could serve as models to launch and motivate agricultural production. Using local commercial farmers could also easily answer some of the outstanding issues such as suspicion about land. The farmer would be given assistance on condition that he could co-opt a given number of out-growers. Farmers could then utilize the services of an agriculturalist and have access to good markets. The pilot could be started in a parish, which would initially be protected by UPDF. People from the select IDP camp would be moved back to the newly planned set up.

It was envisaged that a Farmer Assisted Project would operate as follows:

- A commercial farmer will be identified in an area, which has a relatively small IDP camp with a minimum of 1000 families.
- Following consultation with the camp and the local community leaders, 2000 acres of land will be identified for cultivation for 1000 families.
- In the event that land cannot be identified by the local leaders, the commercial farmer would be requested to avail the required acreage to facilitate the project. This request will, however, be clearly discussed and negotiated with the landowner to include a number of seasons and crops to be cultivated, etc.
- It is also proposed that specific crops be promoted particularly those that have high market value and, provide food security e.g. maize, beans, Upland rice, and groundnuts.
- The IDPs will be required to form groups of 10 to 20 families per production block per crop so as to produce a marketable volume.
- After clear demarcation of blocks, land clearing will be done to facilitate easy furrow ploughing and disc ploughing of the land by tractors.
- The tractors will go through three stages i.e. first ploughing, second ploughing and discing.

- The other stages of planting, weeding and harvesting will be done by the IDPs. However, transportation of harvested crops will be facilitated by the farmer.
- It is also proposed that due to lack of immediate markets for crops for the IDPs, the farmer will buy these crops at an agreed rate but the IDPs will be required to retain a volume of crop for food security.
- For the project to be secure, UPDF will be required to provide security around the production areas before, during and after production.

In conclusion, the Farmer Assisted Projects would be a starting point for the revival of the agricultural economic base of the region and a springboard for fighting poverty and insurgency.

Discussion

Achoka noted that in a conflict situation, people would try to cope – to make life livable. It was a natural demand to produce and acquire property and this applied to the population in Northern Uganda as well. Additionally, it was observed that that people at all levels had been involved and the only appeal is that government to should encourage people to move away from old farming methods to mechanized agriculture. Northern Uganda was one of the most productive areas and the most highly mechanized in the 1960s and hence it needed only to be revitalized.

He added that the project began in 1996; and wherever it was implemented, the land had remained with the landowners.

The Role and Challenges Faced by Uganda National Farmers Federation in Implementing Programmes Related to Food Security in Northern Uganda

by Augustine Mwendya

Mwendya noted that Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE) was a membership-based organization embracing farmers' organizations and agro-related industries, and agro-services sector with a view of utilizing and enhancing their capacity to increase household incomes. It had the following objectives:

- To lobby and advocate for farmer-friendly agricultural policies.
- To unite farmers' organizations and agro-based industries/service organizations under one umbrella organization as a common front for the promotion, coordination and safeguarding of their activities and interests.

- To improve the farmers' incomes and welfare through increasing the quality and quantity of their produce on a sustainable basis.
- To mainstream gender, HIV/AIDS and natural resource management in its programmes and activities.

He added that a sound food security situation would exist when one had access to adequate nutritious food all the time for healthy and active life. At the same time, that access to food would be attained through production especially in an agricultural country like Uganda. UNFFE's role in promoting food security focuses mainly on assisting farmers to access food through production. To do this, the federation had a number of programmes which included:

- Delivery of Agricultural Advisory Services
- Farmer Training
- Provision of market information
- Provision of information
- Distribution of agricultural inputs

He, however, noted that the Federation was confronted with some challenges which included difficulty in building the farmers institutions, mobilization, limited purchasing power, limited availability of inputs, and lack of means of production. He concluded that UNFFE could play a big role in food security in Northern Uganda given that it already had well organized farmers' institutions with elaborate structures which were democratic and transparent.

Discussion

A participant asked whether the Federation is making use of the existing structures of cooperative societies, and how one qualified to be a member. Questioned also, was whether the Federation lobbied for the sector or only the farmers. Were services available only to members? Was there any duplication of services given the existence of NAADS?

Response

Mwendya noted that cooperative societies were very vibrant in the past. Currently, the Federation had a Memorandum of understanding with the Cooperative Alliance and actually did some work with them.

On membership, he said farmers organizations, individuals and families were welcome and eligible for membership but after paying the requisite fees.

However, some services were restricted to members except services such as sale of inputs, which were open to all.

The Federation lobbied and advocated for the farmers and had been particularly successful concerning the taxation of agricultural inputs. Currently, the Federation was lobbying for the removal of withholding tax on fertilizers.

He noted that there was no duplication of work with NAADS but were well coordinated with the same.

The Way Forward

Participants agreed on the following way forward:

1. There is need to in-build into this dialogue a strategy on communication of the right message at the right time, and to the right audience by getting these ideas into the mainstream media.
2. There is need to approach planning through thorough investigation in order to inform any planned programme.
3. There is need to engage the relevant ministries with views generated from the dialogue as well as directing the debate to the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture.
4. Research should be carried out on traditional cash crops that may not always end up in the market.
5. Emphasis should be laid on other development aspects such as education in the conflict areas.
6. Explore the possibility of averting conflict through accessing food and /or medicine to the rebels as a negotiation weapon.
7. Micro-finance institutions targeting the rural poor should be managed by the communities in which they operate.

Recap By The Dialogue Coordinator, *Mr. Samson Opolot*

Opolot thanked all the participants for honouring the invitation and commitment to the process. He noted that the outcome was that there was a big understanding of food security in the country as a whole and urged the participants to relate to resolving the issue of food security without waiting for the guns to go silent and engage the policy-makers and the relevant ministries into the process.

He informed the participants that a report on the proceedings would be written and shared with the relevant stakeholders in order to exchange more ideas and take the process forward.

Closing Remarks From The Executive Director, Cbr

Dr. Rutabajuuka thanked the participants for taking time to attend the dialogue and made it clear that what was happening in Northern Uganda was a national issue. He informed them that it would not end at that forum, but would be kept going. He also noted that the deliberations would be targeted to a wider audience and the relevant offices so as to incorporate them into policy that would reach out to the affected communities.

He further emphasized the holistic approach of ending the conflict; and noted that all the stakeholders needed to be involved in order to intensify the peace process.

Dr. Rutabajuka thanked Clingendael for funding the dialogue and pledged that there would be continued collaboration and networking.

List of Participants

1. Mr. Edward Rubanga	Centre for Basic Research
2. Ms. Charity Kyomugisha	Centre for Basic Research
3. Mr. Grace Kintu	Nkumba University
4. Mr. Jens Berggren	Swedish Embassy
5. Mr. Christopher Olwayo	Uganda Television
6. Mr. Dan Mulika	WBS Television
7. Dr. Simon Rutabajuka	Centre for Basic Research
8. Mr. James Budden	Namuwongo Project
9. Ms. Maureen Nakirunda	Centre for Basic Research
10. Mr. David Kibikyoo	Centre for Basic Research
11. Lt. Col Francis Achoka	UPDF IDP Monitor – Gulu
12. Mr. Edward Wotima	Mukwano Industries
13. Mr. Elem John	Mukwano Industries
14. Dr. Lawyer Kafureka	Centre for Basic Research
15. Mr. Steven Asimwe	Centre for Basic Research
16. Ms. Esther Cherop	Centre for Basic Research
17. Mr. Augustine Mwendya	Uganda National Farmers Federation
18. Ms. Namara Rwomushana	Security and Production Programme
19. Mr. Kintu Kavuma	National Planning Authority
20. Mr. Wilson Turinawe	National Planning Authority
21. Mr. Mwambutsya Ndebesa	Centre for Basic Research
22. Mr. Oscar Okech	Uganda Land Alliance
23. Ms. Ida Kusiima	CDRN
24. Mr. Patrick Luganda	The Farmers Voice
25. Major Shaban Bantariza	UPDF Spokesman
26. Ms. Caroline Murimi	Kituo cha Katiba
27. Dr. Okello Ogwang	Centre for Basic Research
28. Ms. Stella Ayugi	Makerere University
29. Dr. Murindwa Rtanga	Centre for Basic Research
30. Mr. Samson Opolot	Centre for Basic Research
31. Mr. Peter Oliavna	The Vanguard Newspaper
32. Mr. Tom Mugisa	PMA Secretariat
33. Mr. Nathan Echodu	International Christian Concern
34. Mr. Imalingat	International Christian Concern
35. Lt. Gen. Salim Saleh	Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF)

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