Water provision as a peacebuilding tool

Developing a conflict-sensitive approach to water delivery in Uganda

June 2008

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

CBO	community-based organisation
CECORE	Center for Conflict Resolution
CoU	Church of Uganda
DWD	Directorate of Water Development
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDP	internally displaced person
KIDDP	Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Plan
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MP	Member of Parliament
MTBF	Medium Term Budget Framework
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MWE	Ministry of Water and Environment
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRMO	National Resistance Movement Organisation
NWSC	National Water and Sewerage Corporation
O & M	operation and maintenance
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PRDP	Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda
REDROC	Rwenzori Development and Research Center
UOWS	Umbrella Organisations for Water and Sanitation
UWASNET	Uganda Water and Sanitation NGO Network
YODEO	Youth Development Organisation – Arua

Contents

Executive summary

THE PROVISION OF SAFE WATER has the potential both to greatly improve quality of life for communities and to contribute to other long-term development improvements. But this potential can be undermined if water services are provided in a way that aggravates tensions or conflicts in the beneficiary communities. If this happens, water provision will be neither sustainable nor equitable, and can actually result in further conflict.

Conflict issues arising from insensitive water service provision can include: disputes over land for water facility installation; competition between different communities over water resources; disagreements over water use for human needs vis-à-vis animals or crops and poor maintenance of water facilities. Water service provision therefore needs to consider its impact on the likelihood of increasing violent conflict occurring or recurring, and develop ways of how it can instead contribute to the development of more peaceful communities.

This report examines how water delivery in Uganda impacts on – and is influenced by – conflict dynamics, to inform discussions within the water sector on how to make sure investments in water delivery contribute to peaceful and prosperous communities. It shows how taking a conflict-sensitive approach can improve the day-to-day work of water sector practitioners at district and national levels, while effectively addressing the needs of water consumers.

The research forms part of an ongoing project of work by Saferworld and the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE), in collaboration with district-based partners Rwenzori Development and Research Center (REDROC, Kasese) and Youth Development Organisation (YODEO, Arua)[i]. The joint project has focused quite narrowly on water delivery, and therefore excludes the sanitation aspects of the sector.

Based on research, practical field experiences and interviews with the Directorate of Water Development (DWD) and other water sector officials (governmental and non-governmental), and including some of the lessons learned from the Saferworld and partners project, the report identifies some areas that DWD can take forward to ensure that provision of water facilities across Uganda have a positive impact upon long-term peace and development. The report reviews existing national water policies; key actors in the water sector; the assessment and planning phases; the software (working with communities) and operation and maintenance of water provision in Uganda.
It then outlines how conflict sensitivity can be integrated and developed in each of these areas to make water service delivery in Uganda better contribute to peace.

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i Saferworld has been working with partners Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE, Kampala), Rwenzori Development and Research Centre (REDROC) in Kasese and Youth Development Organisation (YODEO) in Arua in a two-year project on conflict-sensitive development, focusing on the water sector.

Specific considerations are also outlined for the conflict-affected regions of Northern and North-Eastern Uganda.

A summary of the key recommendations is provided below, and has provided the starting point for a broader discussion within DWD and with other actors in the water sector for developing more conflict-sensitive water provision in Uganda.

■ Integrate conflict issues into water policy, using the experience of other cross-cutting issues like HIV/AIDS and gender.

■ Improve co-ordination between DWD, district water offices and civil society

■ Improve support for new districts and promote cross-district co-ordination and sharing of lessons

■ Integrate conflict analysis into assessment and planning stages of water interventions in conflict-affected areas

■ Improve compensation practices and how they are communicated

■ Improve maintenance practices, particularly when too much burden is placed on the owners of the land on which the water infrastructure is situated.

■ Allocate more resources to software work

■ Include a conflict analysis component into the Handbook for Community Management

■ Encourage extension workers from different communities to work together

■ Improve feedback procedures to water users

■ Extend software support beyond the completion of the hardware phase

■ Improve the sequencing of software and hardware phases

■ Keep communities informed of their responsibilities and what they can expect, as well as relevant complaints procedures

For Northern and North-Eastern Uganda, the following issues are particularly important:

■ Tailor and co-ordinate software provision in returnee areas

■ Conduct conflict analysis in Karamoja

■ Examine possibilities of linking district water provision between Karamoja and its neighbours in order to better manage inter-district water-related conflicts

■ Promote continuous planning and co-ordination with UN agencies and other key actors in returnee areas

■ Improve co-ordination between different development and reconstruction initiatives for the North and North-East

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Introduction

CONFLICT IS A NORMAL PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE that does not have to be destructive. If handled well, conflict between people can actually create the conditions for positive and lasting societal change. However, conflict that is not managed properly can become a negative force, dividing communities, and in the worst cases, leading to violence and destruction.

Preventing violent conflict and managing conflict constructively is a complex process that involves many players. Communities experiencing conflicts are the primary players in resolving them. However, conflicts can sometimes be made worse when new investments come into the area as it could result in a change in power relationships. For example, if the leader of one of two conflicting groups in the same community is put in charge of a water facility, this could change power relationships and increase conflict. This is where the water sector can really make a contribution. In this case, it might be more beneficial to share the responsibility of the water facility management between the leaders of the two groups so that they can work together and use this experience as a basis for solving the tensions between them. But in order to make these types of decisions, a better understanding of what is going on in the community is essential.

When conflict is mentioned in the Ugandan context, the conflict in Acholi and the insecurity in Karamoja often spring to mind. Yet so many parts of Uganda, particularly the West Nile and Western Uganda, have also experienced violent conflict in the past. Research has shown that there is an increased likelihood of violent conflict recurring in communities that have already experienced such conflicts. This means that in Uganda, water service provision – and development assistance more broadly – needs to consider its impact on the likelihood of increasing violent conflict, and develop ways of how it can actually contribute to more peaceful communities.

To ensure that water provision reaches the goals of improved human development, it has to be conflict-sensitive. That is, it must at a minimum not worsen existing divisions in communities, and at a maximum be designed and implemented in a way that brings communities together and supports them to manage conflict constructively in the future. This does not mean that the water sector is to become the sole actor responsible for resolving conflicts, but instead that water sector resources be used to address some of the issues causing conflict to make water interventions more effective and sustainable.

The Directorate of Water Development (DWD) within the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) has made very good progress in recent years in improving the efficiency of the water sector. However, experience on the ground reveals there are still problems in water delivery that can cause conflicts in beneficiary communities. Even

where these conflicts do not become violent, they sometimes cause serious divisions within or between communities. Some reasons for conflicts involving water service delivery include:

- **Disputes over land to be used for installation of water facilities.** For example, urban water projects in small and big towns face numerous tensions over compensation for land and usually pay the owners in order to install projects. Yet in rural areas, no compensation is paid and the land is considered to be the community's contribution to the water.

- **Lack of access to water or competition between communities for water resources.** For example, there are cases of Bakonzo and Batooro communities competing for water which has fed into historical animosities between these groups.

- **Disagreements over whether water should be used for human needs or for animals or crops.** There are several examples of such conflicts across Uganda, including competition for water resources in the water-stressed cattle corridor areas which lead to fighting. And there are tensions between cultivators and pastoralists in Kasese, Sembabule, and Luweero, among others.

- **User committees who collect user fees but do not provide the necessary maintenance of the facilities.** This could be either due to lack of skills/knowledge, or because they keep the money for themselves.

- **Political leaders (MPs) or local leaders that play on local political, ethnic or religious divisions to increase their own support base.** For example some politicians will tell people they failed to get water facilities because they voted for the 'wrong' person or belong to the 'wrong' ethnic group.

- **Water vendors in urban areas that lose their income.** Sometimes, a new water facility will lead to a loss of income for vendors. This can lead to vendors sabotaging the new water infrastructure. In Kigumba town, Masindi district, water vendors destroyed pipelines for a gravity flow scheme as they felt their interests were not taken into consideration by the project.

- **Communities venting their frustrations on service providers.** Sometimes district water engineers or private contractors are chased away when they come to work on the water facility because of discontent about why certain facilities were put in certain locations or why a specific design was followed. This has happened in several project sites across Uganda and sometimes causes serious problems for water projects.

Even though the above examples often do not lead to large-scale conflict, such incidents undermine community cohesion and effective service provision. Communities can become more vulnerable to violent conflict, particularly if mobilisation for violence occurs in their areas. Moreover, these small conflicts can easily trigger bigger conflicts if they occur in areas where conflict dynamics easily generate violence, as in Acholi or Karamoja. In areas less susceptible to large-scale violence, these conflicts tend to give rise to violence against individuals, for example against district engineers or the water user committee members. This can seriously undermine community ownership of the water facilities or directly diminish the potential benefit of the water infrastructure.

The water sector in Uganda is well-organised, with a sector strategy, budget expenditure framework and relevant co-ordination committees. The Water Sector strategy explicitly makes the links to Uganda's primary development framework, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), in particular to Pillar 2 (Enhancing Production, Competitiveness and Incomes which includes water for production and water resources management), Pillar 3 (Security, Conflict Resolution and Disaster Management which includes water for security in North-Eastern Uganda and provision of water and sanitation services to IDPs) and Pillar 5 (Human Development

which includes water supply and sanitation).[1] As such, the sector already recognises the impact of conflict on water provision and the potential for water provision to promote human security and peace. However, there are areas that can be strengthened further from a conflict-sensitive perspective. There are also some particular challenges relating to the severely conflict-affected parts of Uganda in the North and North-East. This is already acknowledged to some extent in the existing sector strategy, but can be further developed in view of the increased efforts for Northern Uganda under the umbrella of the Peace, Reconstruction and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP).

1 The PEAP is soon to be replaced by the National Development Plan, but this was still being developed at the time of writing.

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Methodology

THIS REPORT SEEKS TO STIMULATE THINKING around conflict-sensitive water provision and serve as the starting point for discussion and action within the Ugandan water sector. It provides information on practical experiences in water provision by the rural and urban water departments of the Department for Water Development (DWD). Specifically focusing on the link between water service provision and conflict, it draws out where water sector policies and practice have been successful in taking into account any conflicts that may arise during the provision of water services. It also identifies some areas that may benefit from further improvement to ensure optimum benefit to communities and fulfilment of DWD objectives.

The report reviews the national policies of the water sector, in particular the National Water Policy (1995), the Water Act (1997) and the Water and Environment Sector Medium-Term Budget Framework Paper, Volume 1: Water and Sanitation, 2007/08– 2009/10 (January 2006). The Handbook for Community Management and the Handbook for Technology Development are also reviewed as key toolkits for how water sector extension workers work with communities.

In addition, interviews were conducted with a range of national-level DWD officials including social scientists in different departments, district water department officials and communities involved in the project work in Kasese and Arua (see Annex 1 for interviewee information and other sources). The lessons from the Saferworld and partners project are also included here, as are references to an unpublished piece of research[2] undertaken for the project on the water sector.

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2 Male, V. (Interface Consulting), *Conflict-sensitive approaches in the water sector*, (unpublished), August 2007.

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Conflict sensitivity in the Ugandan water sector

THIS SECTION PROVIDES A BRIEF OVERVIEW of the current policies and practices of the Ugandan water sector and to what extent this succeeds in being conflict-sensitive. It covers national water policy; the structure of the water sector and its key actors; the assessment and planning stages of water provision; software; and operation and maintenance. It also reviews aspects of water policy and practice in the conflict-affected regions of Northern and North-Eastern Uganda.

3.1 National water policy

The Ugandan constitution recognises the importance of access to water to the people, evidencing how central water is to many aspects of Ugandan society. Much work has therefore been done on improving the policy framework for the water sector to ensure maximum and effective access to water across the country.

Shifting from supply- to demand-driven approach In the late 1990s, national water policy in Uganda shifted from a supply-driven to a demand-driven approach. This was reinforced by the move towards greater decentralisation of government service delivery. From a conflict perspective, both decentralisation and demand-driven service delivery has a potentially positive impact because it takes into account the specificities of different communities and tailors government services to their needs.[3] This approach provides a good foundation for conflict-sensitive water delivery, as long as the allocation of resources is done equitably, funds are disbursed on time and managed transparently and communities are properly involved in decision-making. The sector has also previously worked on mainstreaming cross-cutting issues such as gender and HIV/AIDS, giving it relevant experience that can be applied to conflict prevention.

Increased importance of 'software' work This shift of emphasis to community-based needs identification and planning requires good on-the-ground support to communities, as is envisaged by the 'software' component of water service delivery. However, it appears that sometimes not enough time and money is spent on effectively

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3 However the demand-driven approach (DDA) to water service can lead to under-servicing of particular communities if significant and sufficient mobilisation and software activities are not carried out. As Water Aid (2005) notes 'adherence to the principles of DDA means that communities that fail to express effective demand are left un-served … and that the success of the DDA requires that communities receive information and education.'

completing the software components (for more detail, see 3.4 below). Insufficient community involvement undermines community-based water management, and can generate conflicts within and between communities, and between communities and private sector or district water officials.

Stronger role for local leaders and MPs In this decentralised context, the power and role of district level and local leaders and MPs is much increased. They influence what communities ask for and can influence contracts, for example contracting private sector companies for water provision. Several of the social scientists inter-viewed referred to the challenges posed by interference of local politicians or leaders in the tendering process when they have a financial interest in the bidding companies.

Some local leaders also use the water facilities as a political bargaining chip, claiming that it is due to their influence that water is provided. At times, decisions about water provision are used by local politicians to enflame political rivalry. For instance in Kasese, two communities argued over who would benefit from a new water gravity flow scheme. Tensions were further enflamed as local leaders declared that one community (from Rukoki) would benefit because it voted for the ruling party, and the other (from Mahango) would not benefit as it largely voted for the opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC).[4] In another example[5], an MP allegedly used her political power to get a water pipe extension directly to her house – not part of the original design for the scheme – which did not bring additional benefit to the rest of the community.

This kind of behaviour from local leaders and politicians can be very negative and can lead to communities feeling that they are being treated unfairly, which can fuel conflict.[6]

Equitable resource distribution At the national level, many of the conflicts that Uganda has experienced, including the conflicts in Northern and North-Eastern Uganda, have been fuelled by certain groups or areas feeling marginalised and neglected by central government. The way in which water resources, including national funding and actual infrastructure, are distributed across the country can therefore really impact on people's perceptions about whether they are being neglected or receiving their fair share of national resources. Some of the water coverage statistics indicate that although average water provision has been consistently improving, some districts seem to be in a much better position than others. For example, towns served by the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) had an average access rate of 68% in 2005, but within this there was a range of around 35% access in Soroti and 80% access in Mbarara.[7]

Influence of national politics National politics can also influence perceptions about why water services are provided to some communities and not others. Even if decisions are based on technical or practical reasons but are not well communicated to consumers, this can lead them to believe that there are other, more negative reasons for these decisions.

At an Urban Water Authorities promotional workshop[8] in December 2005, some of the difficulties with local water provision in small towns were explored. National politics interfered in efficient water provision to such an extent in some towns that communities feared that construction of water facilities would only continue as long as local politicians were campaigning for the upcoming national elections, and would probably not be completed after the results were announced.

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4 This issue emerged from the work Saferworld, CECORE and REDROC were doing in Kasese district, accompanying the water gravity flow scheme in Mahango/Rukoki sub-counties.
5 Interview with social scientist from the Urban Water Authorities Department.
6 This factor is also cited as explanation for unequal water access within districts, Male, pp.12–13.
7 Male, pp.11–12.
8 MWE (December 2005).

3.2 **Sector structures and key actors**

There are several key actors in the Ugandan water sector including relevant government departments, community level structures, NGOs and the local districts. While this system clearly offers certain benefits, it also generates the need for strong co-ordination between these actors in order to ensure efficient and transparent service delivery.

Specialised government departments The Ugandan water sector structure allows different departments to deal with the specific needs of particular types of communities, for example, rural and urban, and the different uses for water across the country, such as water for production (agriculture, industry, pastoralist cattle-keeping) and water for domestic use (cooking, personal hygiene, sanitation, domestic livestock, gardening etc). Departments can therefore specialise and deliver better quality services to all the different types of water consumers, while at the same time safeguarding water for domestic use. Communities who feel marginalised or unfairly treated by the central government regarding access to water can then more easily address their complaints to the relevant water sector structures.

Community level structures In a decentralised, community-based system such as in Uganda, the structures set up at the community level for planning, managing and maintaining the water facilities become very important. These structures take different shapes depending on the type of facilities used, for example project management or water user committees in rural water provision. Experience has shown however, that there are often problems with these structures.

Sometimes individuals on the committees regard the facilities as their private property, charging additional fees for consumers to use the facilities, or personally keeping the monies intended for the maintenance of the facilities. For example, in Rakai, the community attacked an individual for taking the user fees for himself while managing a borehole.[9] These experiences show that local level project management or water user committees can actually cause conflicts through their behaviour. However, if they work in a transparent way and for the interests of the whole community by effectively collaborating with others – such as elders involved in mediating disputes or community-based organisations (CBOs) involved in conflict resolution – these structures could be important mechanisms for preventing or resolving local conflicts.

Non-governmental service providers Across Uganda, different service providers operate in the water sector, such as international and local NGOs and the Church of Uganda (CoU). In many cases, these organisations contribute to water service coverage by complementing the work that DWD manages. But in some cases, the co-ordination between these organisations and the different government and non-government stakeholders at national and district level is insufficient.

There have been cases where organisations have obstructed government projects aimed at expanding or improving water facilities. For example, In Kyotera, a church-based organisation constructed a production well and when DWD sought to expand the facilities to serve a larger population, the organisation allegedly refused to agree or tolerate 'interference' with its facilities. Since then, Kyotera has been given town status, meaning that people have to start paying water tariffs. The organisation has allegedly sought compensation and has requested free water for the church as pre-conditions to any improvement of the water facilities.[10]

In some cases, it is evident that NGOs prefer to work in easily accessible towns or rural areas, leading to several facilities being set up in some communities, with others not benefiting at all.[11] This is particularly the case in the conflict-affected districts in

9 Interview with social scientist from UOWS.
10 Interviews with social scientists from UOWS and the Urban Water Authorities Division.
11 This is confirmed in Male, p.13.

Northern Uganda, but is also evident in other parts of the country. In these areas, NGO water interventions can contribute to increased tensions in communities because the different facilities each have a user group which leads to people feeling they are unable to use all available facilities, but only the one from 'their NGO'. This causes conflict in the beneficiary communities, but also undermines the ability of DWD to manage water coverage and how best to spend government resources to target communities that are not benefiting from NGO or other providers.[12]

New districts   The Medium Term Budget Framework[13] paper acknowledges the capacity challenges posed by the creation of numerous new districts and undertakes to continue prioritising capacity-building support to these new district administrations to ensure good quality water service delivery. New districts can easily contribute to tensions between neighbouring communities, or between districts, if one community benefits from more state resources than the other. By ensuring that new districts have sufficient capacity to provide services, this potential tension can be mitigated.

3.3 Assessment and planning stages

The preparation and planning of water projects is crucial in terms of ensuring effective and conflict-sensitive service delivery. Insufficient information or inadequate planning and budgeting can seriously undermine water delivery before any work has even been undertaken on the ground.

Assessments for water provision   When any new water intervention is planned, a number of assessments are conducted, including feasibility studies, surveys of socio-economic and demographic conditions and technical surveys to determine the best technology for that particular area. Depending on the area and the type of water infrastructure provided, environmental impact assessments may also be conducted.

From a conflict perspective, it is important to understand who else would be competing for the same water resources, and some of the environmental and technical assessments can help identify such problems. For example, it is important to understand how much water is available in an area and how best to make this available to pastoralist and settled communities in water-stressed areas.

Power and conflict analyses   Although the socio-economic and demographic surveys provide some initial information about the beneficiary communities, to be truly conflict-sensitive this needs to be supplemented by a more in-depth analysis of the power relationships and existing sources of division in those same communities. Such information would assist the extension workers, private sector companies, NGOs and district water offices to plan the water projects to prevent conflict and where possible, to use the water project as a way to bring together divided communities.

Community participation   The current community mapping process is a good participatory planning tool and provides a useful basis for genuine community participation and ownership. But it is equally important to recognise the potential for certain powerful members of the community to dominate discussions and so risk the exclusion of less vocal or less powerful members of the community such as women, young people, or perhaps those without strong connections to local leaders. Without such inclusion, conflicts can arise within communities during or after the construction of the water facility because some people feel excluded from the process.

12 Experience of project staff.
13 This paper reviews progress in terms of implementing water sector objectives and budget allocations for next activities within the sector.

Land disputes and by-laws When community maps are drawn up during the planning stages, written agreements are also produced between the land owner and local leaders over the land that will be used for the installation of the water facilities. Despite this arrangement, later on in the process, disputes can still arise.

In some cases, family members or the land owners later complain about the use of their land or demand compensation[14] – particularly when it becomes clear that this inconveniences them or damages their crops once the water point is in use. In urban areas, land owners are normally compensated if this use of their land causes their crops or other possessions to become damaged.

This issue arose when a borehole was constructed in Arua[15]. Although the father agreed to the use of his land for installation of a borehole, the son whose inheritance this was, did not agree. An alternative solution for the son's land entitlement had to be found before the situation was resolved. In rural areas, however, compensation is not available to landowners for the land they donate, or for damage to their crops as a result of others using the facility. In fact, in Kasese, by-laws stipulate that if a land-owner damages the water facility infrastructure on his land, for example whilst digging in his fields, he is personally responsible for repairing this facility.[16] This often leads to leaks going unreported, which in turn means water loss in the system. Additional resources then have to be spent to identify the leaks and fix them. It therefore seems clear that land issues and compensation remain a big challenge to the effective implementation of water services. In addition, different policies for urban and rural areas cause unhappiness and needs to be addressed.

3.4 **Software**[17]

To fulfil its objective to provide needs-based water services, the water sector has recognised the importance of complementing hardware water infrastructure provision with software components which seek to inform and involve communities in water provision. The thinking behind this is that communities need support in articulating what they need (e.g. drawing up community maps that indicate where they need water provided), understanding the available technologies and their suitability for a particular area, and participating where appropriate in the construction, operation and maintenance of the water hardware.

Software budget allocations The software component of water service delivery can therefore be seen as one of the key tools for fulfilling the water sector policy aims, and up to 12% of project budgets can to be allocated to software activities (an increase from the previous 3%). But the equivocal nature of water sector schedules and guidelines on the usage of conditional grants, means that local authorities have discretionary powers to determine what percentage to spend on this and in some instances, politicians insist on spending nothing on software aspects, but instead spend everything on hardware[18]. Even though such an approach may result in a greater number of water facilities, the risk is that many of these may not be properly owned, maintained or protected by communities, thereby ultimately undermining the usefulness of constructing them.

Community ownership and management of facilities One social scientist[19] remarked that vandalism to water facilities sometimes occurs because communities are not properly involved in planning processes, and therefore do not really feel like

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14 Social scientist, Small Towns Project (ADB).
15 This came up during the accompaniment project work of Saferworld/CECORE and YODEO.
16 Male, p.21.
17 Many of the issues highlighted in this section are confirmed by Male, pp.16–17.
18 Interview with social scientists from rural water department and UOWS.
19 Interview with social scientist from the national secretariat of UOWS.

they own the facilities. In addition, the software components are sometimes executed speedily and therefore badly, because of pressures to spend the allocated money before the end of the financial year.

In particular, the sequencing of software and hardware components is important to ensure appropriate levels of community mobilisation and involvement, enabling effective hardware development. Where community ownership is absent, problems can arise in terms of using and maintaining the water facilities.[20] For example, in Karamoja some water projects have been undertaken without involving the relevant communities. Despite the work being completed to a technically good standard, the pipes were subsequently cut up by local communities to wear as bangles, indicating that they felt no ownership of this facility and did not see how it benefited them[21].

Software capacity The main implementing staff for the software activities are the extension workers: community development assistants and health assistants, who are not directly under the district water offices, but are managed by the Department for Community Development in the Ministry for Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Department of Health respectively. Sometimes, the extension workers may have their work in the water sector de-prioritised by their ministry.[22] Furthermore, DWD and the district water offices are usually staffed by a majority of engineers, rather than social workers, which often means engineers having to do software work for which they are not trained[23]. One way around this capacity shortage has been to contract in NGOs or CBOs to implement some of these activities. District local governments therefore need innovative ways to address these shortages and get communities more actively involved.

Guidance for software work The main guidance for extension workers is the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Handbook for Extension Workers, Volume 1 on Community Management and Volume 2 on Technology Development. This provides very useful information for how to support community-based planning. It also guides extension workers on how to provide information to communities about water services, helping them match their needs with the available technologies and services, and how communities can operate and maintain the water facilities. The handbook seems to be a very useful tool, not only for the water sector, but more broadly for assisting community-based development across different sectors and encouraging community ownership of new facilities and services. One way to make it even more useful, would be to integrate tips on working with communities and monitoring conflicts into each of the chapters.

Guidance on conflict prevention The Handbook on Community Management also provides tips for managing conflicts that may arise when working with communities and how to troubleshoot emerging problems. However, this approach is very reactive, waiting for conflicts to arise and then having to intervene to solve disputes. If a thorough analysis of the divisions and tensions in communities is undertaken at the start of the software implementation phase, some problems can be foreseen and solved proactively.

The handbook focuses on intra-communal conflicts, for example about water facility management structures and their relationship with the community members. This is important, as conflicts often arise within communities due to inefficient or corrupt water management structures. However, there is also a need to consider conflicts with neighbouring communities, as there are often disputes about shared water resources

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20 Interview with social scientist from UOWS
21 Interview with social scientist from UOWS
22 Interview with social scientist from UOWS; the experience from the Saferworld/CECORE and partners project work in Kasese confirms this – the extension worker there has had very limited availability to be involved in the water project that our local partner is accompanying.
23 Interview with social scientist from rural water department

and how the benefits are spread across different communities or villages. In Kasese district, this problem occurred when the gravity flow scheme was first designed for the Rukoki sub-county, with water flowing from Mahango sub-county. Understandably, the Mahango community felt disadvantaged since they were not benefiting from the scheme, even though they lived at the source of the water. Relationships between the two communities became very tense and they did not speak to each other for some time. Through interventions by REDROC, the district and the community agreed to re-design the scheme so that it would benefit both communities.[24]

Conflict can also arise from the way in which water projects are undertaken, as happened with another gravity flow scheme designed to serve communities in Kabarole, Kasese. One of the Kasese communities, the Bakonzo, threatened to poison the water intended to serve the Batoro communities. The gravity flow scheme therefore contributed to tensions that already existed between these communities. Eventually the Uganda Water and Sanitation NGO Network, (UWASNET) was called in by their members in the area, to assist in resolving this conflict. As a result, the construction of a smaller scheme for the Bakonzo alongside the planned one for the Batoro was agreed.[25]

In another example in Kiboga, a reservoir for a production well was built for a particular community, but no facilities were provided to the community that lived at the source of the water. The community at the source became so frustrated with this situation that they resorted to 'stealing' water from the reservoir at three am in the night, which caused a lot of tension between the two communities.[26]

As the above examples highlight, it is often very difficult for people from the communities involved in a water-related dispute to solve these disputes themselves. Yet the handbook for community management assumes that every community has some capacity already to resolve any conflicts that may arise. There needs to be some recognition of the fact that influential community members, for example, local leaders, are often part of the problem rather than the solution. At times, outside intervention in solving the conflicts that arise is required.

Timing and duration of software work Software implementation also needs to support the entire course of the project so that any problems can be appropriately addressed. For example, if a technical survey shows that the community map cannot be implemented in the way the community wants, this information needs to be communicated back to the community and alternative solutions found within a sufficient timeframe, in order to avoid conflicts arising.

Once the water facility is up and running, support is still needed to communities in terms of managing any new conflicts that may arise. For example, land owners may only realise the inconvenience of having the water facility on their land, or the technical problems associated with it, once the facilities start to be used. The Handbook for Community Management promotes the idea of community-based information management systems, but in a community that is experiencing tensions or arguments, this approach may cause some individuals to manipulate information or complaints to the district water office in order to further their own interests. This could cause further conflict.

Private sector actors In order to ensure effective software implementation, there is also a potential challenge in terms of co-ordination with private sector actors who may be involved in constructing hardware.

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24 This is within the SW/CECORE and partners project on conflict-sensitive development, REDROC is the partner organisation in Kasese.
25 Interview with UWASNET staff member.
26 Interview with social scientist from UOWS.

Firstly, private sector actors will be mainly concerned with delivering the hardware components and will not monitor whether this is done in a co-ordinated way with the software. That responsibility rests with the district water office. Yet if this co-ordination is absent, the work of the private sector actors can be undermined, or they could even become the target of community frustrations.

For example, in rural contexts, contractors have been chased away by a community when they wanted to start their work because of a pending request for compensation for the land used to build the water facilities. In urban contexts, private sector actors are often responsible for the management of water facilities and again have been the targets of community frustrations. For example in Wobulenzi, Nakaseke, communities felt that the private operators managing their water facilities were making lots of money while the consumers had to pay for the water. They physically chased away the private operators from the area and did the same with DWD officials who came to sort out the problem.[27] In this situation, it appears as if the water users either did not understand the role of the private sector actors, or felt that their complaints were not being addressed and took matters into their own hands.

The way in which private companies operate, for example whether they hire local workers etc can also contribute to tensions in the communities. The DWD encourages private contractors to hire local people for the unskilled work. Although this is not an obligation, it is a good start as some conflicts have occurred between casual labourers brought in from other areas and local communities. However, it is important that wages are set at a fair level. In Mityana, local people complained that the wages offered for the work were too low and they felt that the contractor was trying to cheat them.[28]

3.5 Operation and maintenance

One of the challenges to successful water delivery is the need to ensure effective operation and maintenance of any new facilities. This has been very challenging in rural communities, as people are often not sufficiently equipped to deal with the technicalities of maintaining such structures, and in practice sometimes do not receive enough support to do so.[29]

UOWS   The establishment of the Umbrella Organisations for Water and Sanitation (UOWS) in some regions of Uganda appears to have been quite successful so far in co-ordinating and supporting different private companies and NGOs involved in operation and maintenance work. The work of UOWS members includes community mobilisation for small towns, rural growth centres and gravity flow schemes to ensure good understanding of how to operate and maintain water facilities. In the process, the regional secretariats of UOWS have also been involved in resolving community-level conflicts that have arisen around water facilities. Currently the UOWS has a number of regional secretariats, although at the moment there does not appear to be one for Northern or North-Eastern Uganda.

Payments and tariffs   For most water provision some form of payment is now required in order to cover the costs of maintenance and operation. The amount for this service differs between different types of water facilities (e.g. cities, towns, rural growth centre, rural, gravity flow schemes etc.) and problems seem to arise when consumers are not clear on why they have to pay a particular amount. In particular, when a decision is made to graduate a rural growth centre into a small town, the amount payable for the water services usually increases, often leading to complaints from consumers. This shift can cause resentment and conflict, particularly if people

27   Interview with social scientist, Small Towns Project (ADB)
28   Interview with social scientist, Small Towns Project (ADB)
29   Male, p.17.

do not understand why this is happening and perceive the increased payment as unfair or discriminatory.

In addition, tariffs vary between towns, as they depend on the operation and maintenance costs of the infrastructure used. In an area where there may already be tensions between communities about other issues, such differences could aggravate the situation. This problem has been recognised in the water sector for some time, and when in 2005, the former Minister for Water Land and Environment tried to introduce a uniform tariff across the country, this was met with a lot of resistance from urban water authorities and managers of water systems who said that it would not be enough to cover costs[30]. One can imagine that if a uniform tariff was introduced that did not cover the costs of water facilities, this could lead to the closure of many such facilities. Equally, consumers who suddenly have to pay more for their water would also be unhappy. There is therefore a need to work out how best to manage the different tariffs, and communicate reasons for this to water users.

New investment The water policy[31] stipulates that if water facilities are neglected in a particular area, new investment in that area should not be a priority. From a conflict sensitivity perspective, it would be important to know whether the neglect of the older facility was actually due to conflicts around the water facility, insufficient training of management or user committees, or another reason.

If conflicts have arisen around that water facility, they need to be addressed, instead of penalising these communities. Equally, if operation and maintenance skills were badly transferred, communities should not suffer because of this either. In areas where certain groups may already feel marginalised, such policy decisions can deepen their alienation from central or district government.

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30 Interview with social scientist from the Urban Water Authorities Department.
31 National Water Policy, 1999, p.17.

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Specific support for Northern and North-Eastern Uganda

THE ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED ABOVE APPLY TO ALL PARTS OF UGANDA, indicating how important it is to continue mainstreaming conflict issues in the water sector. For the severely conflict-affected districts of North, North-East and North-Western Uganda, there are particular challenges that emerge in relation to water provision and supporting long-term peace.

Assistance to the Northern districts is currently prioritised under the PRDP, in which specific priorities for water provision are included. Although the intention is to direct some of the additional spending required through the normal sector budget, there are also efforts to raise additional money in order to invest a high level of resources in these areas and bring them up to the same standards as the rest of the country. This approach is important to bringing the much-needed infrastructure and service provision to people in these districts. Particularly given that many of them had fairly good levels of access to water provision in the IDP camps, but are now moving to either smaller camps or back to their home areas where these facilities may not exist. Serious challenges to achieving these goals in a way that is conflict-sensitive do, however, exist.

Delivering good quality hard- and software The first question is whether it will be practically possible to deliver a higher number of water facilities, as quickly as possible, and with the necessary software being implemented to a high standard. Issues about land ownership may be particularly challenging, since so many people have been displaced and many of the boundaries denoting ownership were never officially recorded. Local leaders, district officials and elders in Acholi are already aware of this and have started to try and address this issue.[32]

Movement of consumers In addition, people are unlikely to return permanently until the peace talks are on a more secure footing – as long as the risk of a return to war remains, many people will prefer living in the satellite camps (or leaving children and elderly people in the camps because of the better services) and working their fields from there. This uncertainty makes it very difficult to plan for where water facilities

32 Saferworld and CECORE (December 2006), p.19.

should be constructed and who would be best placed to manage these if the community or certain groups within it may move again.

At the same time, if people are moving back to areas where these facilities are not available – particularly if they had access to them in the camps – they may become impatient about not getting the necessary facilities fast enough, or about others receiving facilities that they do not yet have.

Introducing payments There may also be problems with people accepting the payment of tariffs in some of the towns (especially newly-formed towns which were enlarged by the displacement) or maintenance fees in rural areas, when they have had no financial or other obligations for maintenance in the camps. The software aspects of the water provision in these areas therefore have to be well-resourced and executed so that potential conflict issues can be identified early and dealt with proactively.

Co-ordination The issue of co-ordination with other service providers in the water sector – as mentioned above – is particularly important in the Northern districts, because so many NGOs and international actors have been involved in providing water to IDPs and refugees (particularly in West Nile). As the situation stabilises, many of these organisations are likely to pull out, but some may remain and may not see the need for co-ordination with the district.

Equally, when services are provided by these agencies (particularly to refugees), it can create resentment if the level of service provision is unequal. This poses a challenge to the district authorities to co-ordinate the provision of water so that government resources can be effectively targeted, but also to try and ensure that for example refugee services do not cause conflict with the local communities. The German Development Agency GTZ has been running a project in Arua that works specifically on these issues, targeting their water interventions to areas where conflicts over water emerge between refugee and host populations.[33]

Co-ordination in Karamoja For Karamoja, issues of co-ordination are particularly difficult. At the national level, there are several strategic plans covering aspects of the water needs for Karamoja, including the PRDP, the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Plan (KIDDP), and the sector plans. In addition, while some of the facilities in Karamoja may fall under rural or urban water, there are also some interventions under the Water for Production strategies, in recognition of the need for sustaining Karamojong cattle.

But given the close link between conflict and water in this area, it is very important to make sure that water provision is well co-ordinated across the board, and is based on an in-depth understanding of what communities need, what would reduce conflict between them, and how best to involve them in decision-making and implementation of water facilities. This is not easy in Karamoja and will need a lot of experimentation and trying out of different approaches. Therefore it is vital that joint planning and assessment is done across the water sector and linking to other relevant departments (e.g. Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and Ministry of Defence (MoD) on the KIDDP, OPM and the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development on PRDP etc) to strengthen the potential impact of the water provision.

It also appears from the water sector policies and strategies that the goal of the Government of Uganda is to get the nomadic people in Karamoja and elsewhere to settle permanently. While it is recognised that something needs to be done to better accommodate the needs of pastoralists and settled communities, if this is done forcefully, it will cause conflict and thus negatively affect the water sector. There are challenges to overcome in terms of what the best way would be of providing water in

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33 This project is called the GOPA project.

areas like Karamoja that are so badly water-stressed and where seasonal changes may force people to move around in search of water and pasture. And there are also challenges about how this movement – and therefore where the water facilities are set up – causes conflict that in turn could lead to people destroying the water facilities.

5

Recommendations

THIS SECTION OUTLINES SOME WAYS in which the Ugandan water sector can better integrate and develop conflict sensitivity into areas of its work to ensure that water provision contributes to long-term peace and development in the country. These points are intended as a starting point for discussions within the water sector, so that solutions can be identified by relevant stakeholders and partners. Some of the suggested ways forward may require revisions to water sector legislation, policies and budgets to ensure that changes take place.

■ **Integrate conflict issues into water policy**

The experience of promoting cross-cutting issues such as gender and HIV/AIDS provide good models for how the sector may deal with conflict issues as a cross-cutting theme in water provision. DWD is well placed to initiate discussions within the water sector about how conflict prevention and conflict management can be better integrated across the different responses of not only DWD, but ultimately the entire MWE.

At the time of writing, DWD is revising its guidelines and toolkits for water provision. This provides a good opportunity to include sections on how to conduct conflict analyses, how to proactively deal with conflict issues in communities etc.

■ **Improve co-ordination between DWD, district water offices and civil society**

In both rural and emerging town areas, it is often unclear who is responsible for water facilities and the charges involved. There can also be confusion about the correct complaints procedure when things go wrong and this is often due to a lack of co-ordination between DWD and the district water offices and NGOs or other civil society institutions.

Water management structures at the grass-roots level especially need to be strength-ened so that key stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities and rights in relation to the water facilities. This needs to happen in both rural and town communities to avoid powerful individuals hijacking facilities.

■ **Improve support for new districts and cross-district co-ordination**

The ongoing creation of new districts also poses some challenges to effective water service delivery. As much as local capacity needs to be available in new districts to handle the water requirements of the people, there also needs to remain some level of cross-district co-ordination and support in the water sector. This could improve inter-district co-ordination on planning and assessing how best to meet water needs with the available resources of the region; comparison between districts of which technologies are producing the best results; comparison on which operation and

maintenance approaches are working the best; co-ordination on best practice in software work and identification of cases where cross-district software work may be required, for example to accommodate the movements of nomadic groups.

■ **Integrate conflict analysis into assessment and planning stages**

Assessment and planning phases for new water facilities need to include in-depth conflict analyses to help identify the nature of the relationships and the power structures within the beneficiary communities. This would enable the people in charge of software to shape the way the software and hardware components of the project should be implemented to minimise tensions. It would also increase the impact of the tips in the Handbook for Community Management for how to handle conflicts as the extension workers would have a deeper understanding of the community.

■ **Improve compensation practices and how they are communicated**

Although urban landowners are compensated for the use of their land for constructing water facilities, their rural counterparts are not. This is causing problems given how central land is to the livelihoods of most people in rural areas. A solution to this is required which may involve better explanation of the fact that urban water users pay for their water, while rural users do not.

■ **Improve maintenance practices**

By-laws making rural landowners responsible for repairing damage to structures, or similar arrangements, need to be reviewed as they lead to maintenance problems across the water systems. The solution may be to include such maintenance costs in either the maintenance fees paid by the users or through the additional maintenance support from the district water office. Routine checks of particularly gravity flow schemes may be a good way to monitor effective functioning and maintenance, by the UOWS secretariats or the water engineers.

■ **Allocate more resources to software work**

DWD may want to consider increasing and deepening capacity for software activities. At present, there is evidence to suggest that in some cases, software activities are not being carried out efficiently and effectively. The software phase is crucial to the proper implementation and maintenance of the water facilities. If DWD 'frontload' support to the software phase, then the engineers and technicians may find that hardware phase of the work is easier to implement and receive more appreciation from the users.

■ **Include conflict analysis component into the Handbook for Community Management**

To avoid a reactive approach to conflict, it would be beneficial for conflict analysis to be carried out prior to the engagement of the extension worker with the community. This would allow the extension worker to tailor 'tips' for the community that they are working with and guide them through the different phases of the software activities.

If conflict analysis is included in the assessment and planning stage of the water facilities it will be easier for extension workers to address conflict issues at the community level because they will have a deep understanding of community relations. In addition, information gathered during the conflict analysis about the community and about the power relationships between different groups could be used to advise the private contractors before they carry out construction work.

■ **Encourage extension workers from different communities to work together**

DWD could also reduce potential for cross-community and cross-district conflicts to arise by encouraging extension workers from different communities to work together during the software phase.

There is a need for an integrated mechanism to organise cross-district meetings of extension workers, so they can share information about the status of software activities and raise issues of mutual concern relating to the potential for conflict in the areas they are working in. This would allow extension workers and DWD staff to address tensions about water before they erupt into conflict. This approach would also help to address issues arising from tensions between communities and external user groups who come into the area to access water facilities.

■ **Improve feedback procedures**

More emphasis should be placed on a process whereby communities receive feedback about the status of water service provision. In particular, communities should be made aware of why particular types of water service provision technologies were chosen and other decisions made. This is especially important when these decisions may not reflect the initial community maps and requests.

■ **Extend software support beyond completion of hardware phase**

There is a need to continue supporting software activities following the completion of the hardware phase and particularly during the operation phase of the projects.

In the period following the initial construction of the water facilities many tensions can arise that could be reduced through sustained software activities led by the extension worker. The software phase should be expanded to include support to communities to address any new conflicts that directly arise because of the management of the new water services. DWD could support the extension workers to strengthen existing conflict resolution mechanisms and structures within the community to carry out software activities themselves or to identify alternatives if this is not possible (for example, an NGO or respected individual from the area who is able to mediate disputes).

■ **Improve sequencing of software and hardware phases**

Emphasis should also be placed on better matching the sequencing of software and hardware phases to ensure that the work of private contractors does not take place without proper attention to the software phase. This should include in some way communicating the needs and aspirations of the community – voiced during the software phase – to the private contractors before they begin to construct the water facilities.

■ **Inform communities of their responsibilities and rights**

Informed communities will always help to minimise tensions and reduce the potential for conflict. More and better information needs to be provided to communities on a range of issues during water projects.

Information is particularly important in rural growth town centres that are being promoted to small town status. People need to understand that the graduation process probably includes the introduction of water tariffs – this should be included into the software work.

Sufficient information about complaints procedures also needs to be provided so that users are clear about how and where to complain if they are not happy with the services provided by private companies. In this way, problems can be solved through the appropriate structures, rather than running the risk of people taking the law into their own hands.

Water providers (probably through the extension workers and partners) also need to understand why water facilities are neglected in particular areas. For example, if the reason driving neglect of the services relates to a conflict issue, then it may be possible to address the root cause through mediation by an external party thereby allowing the community to work together to manage the water services.

Specific support for Northern and North-Eastern Uganda

■ **Co-ordinate and tailor software for returnee areas**

Tailoring software to focus on the most important issues and/or the identification of partners so that software can be done adequately – even within short timelines – is important in Northern and North-Eastern Uganda. It may even be possible to co-ordinate the software for the water provision with mobilisation and software for other services, e.g. health and education interventions. This would also help avoid a situation where several user committees are set up in the same communities at the same time for the services that are being implemented.

Attention will also need to be paid to any possible tensions arising about leadership, where local leaders and those who were camp leaders may not be the same people.

■ **Conduct conflict analysis in Karamoja**

For Karamoja, it would be useful to conduct a conflict analysis across the sector, so that this information can be mapped over the technical work on where the best places are to put water facilities.

This should help DWD, and the Water for Production sub-sector in particular, to build the water facilities in places that will not result in increased conflict between communities who for example, compete for water facilities. This type of analysis and planning should be done with local community leaders and NGOs/CBOs in Karamoja who already work on conflict issues and who could advise the MWE on the conflict dynamics in the area. This information will help DWD to assess their own risks in terms of identifying the best time in the year to work on water facilities since the conflicts seem to go in cycles along with the seasons.

■ **Consider linking district water provision between Karamoja and its neighbours**

Another option would be to more closely link the district water provision in Karamoja with that of neighbouring areas like Teso.

Rain water tends to run off to Teso resulting in Karamojong groups following the water. If this were more widely understood, more facilities could perhaps be built in Karamoja to capture some of the rain water. Alternatively, arrangements could be made with communities in both Karamoja and Teso about how best to share the water facilities in Teso in a non-violent way. The water facilities could even be used as a tool for peacebuilding between Teso and Karamoja, by agreeing on certain rules and behaviour for the groups using the water.

■ **Promote continuous planning and co-ordination with UN agencies and other key actors**

To ensure that the same quality of services is provided to both refugee and host communities, consistent and regular planning with UN agencies and others is necessary in water provision services to refugees in West Nile and elsewhere. This should help to avoid conflict between these groups.

■ **Improve co-ordination between different development and reconstruction initiatives**

The implementation of the PRDP should generate additional resources to water provision alongside sector work. Care needs to be taken to ensure that this is well co-ordinated, avoiding duplication of work or unnecessary expenditure. One mechanism for achieving this may be to establish umbrella organisations in North and North-East Uganda as has been done in other regions. They have proved to be effective in assisting co-ordination of water provision efforts as well as operation and maintenance of water infrastructure, and could thus help reduce any conflicts emerging in these regions.

6

Conclusion

THE INFORMATION IN THIS REPORT has highlighted how conflicts can arise when water services are provided. While these conflicts do not always generate violence, they undermine social cohesion and hamper the effectiveness of water delivery. In conflict-affected areas like the North and North-East of Uganda, such divisions can feed into other conflict dynamics and spark larger-scale violence.

DWD and the water sector in general have already done some good thinking on how best to approach such issues. This report presents an opportunity for the water sector to advance its thinking about conflict-sensitive water provision and to make sure that it becomes central to the standard way of working across the sector.

In the process, the water sector should maximise its partnerships with NGOs, CBOs, the umbrella organisations for operation and maintenance and private sector institutions, so that all the actors in the sector can work towards the same goal of conflict-sensitive service delivery.

Our own experience in Kasese has demonstrated that communities really appreciate the additional benefit derived from having the gravity flow scheme there implemented in a conflict-sensitive way. This experience could be replicated across the country and could really support DWD and the water sector as a whole to meet its objectives more effectively.

ANNEX 1: Interviewee information

Social Scientist – UOWS National Secretariat, DWD
Social Scientist – Africa Development Bank Small Towns Water Project, DWD
Social Scientist – Urban Water Authorities Department, DWD
Social Scientist – Rural Water Department, DWD
National Coordinator – UOWS
Two Social Scientists – Water for Production, DWD
Advocacy and Networking Officer – UWASNET

District based interviewees in Kasese and Arua:
District Water Officer – Kasese
Assistant Water Officer – Kasese
District Water Officer – Arua
Assistant Water Officer – Arua

Communities in Kasese (Mahango and Rukoki sub-counties) and in Arua
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This report is part of an ongoing, two-year project on promoting conflict-sensitive development in Uganda, with a strong focus on the role of civil society in implementing and advocating for conflict sensitivity. The water sector was selected as a pilot engagement for learning lessons about decentralised conflict-sensitive programming and applying these to overarching sector policies and national development frameworks. Saferworld has been working on this project with national project partner, the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE), and with two district-based partners, the Rwenzori Development and Research Centre (REDROC, Kasese) and the Youth Development Organisation (YODEO, Arua).

The Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) is a not-for-profit NGO founded in 1995 to promote alternative and creative means of preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Above all, CECORE seeks to empower individuals, communities, institutions and organisations to transform conflict through alternative and creative means in order to establish a culture of active tolerance and peace.

Saferworld works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote co-operative approaches to security. We work with governments, international organisations and civil society to encourage and support effective policies and practices through advocacy, research and policy development and through supporting the actions of others.

COVER PHOTO: Watering crops in Uganda. © KATIE HARRIS