



Uganda

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	869,000 (Northern Uganda)
Percentage of total population	2.7%
Start of current displacement situation	1988
Peak number of IDPs (and year)	1,800,000 (2005)
New displacement in 2008	0 (Northern Uganda); undetermined (Karamoja)
Returns in 2008	400,000
Causes of displacement	Internal armed conflict (Northern Uganda), generalised violence and human rights violations (Karamoja)
Human development index	154

Around half of the 1.8 million people originally displaced in camps in northern Uganda's Acholi, Lango and Teso sub-regions had returned to their home areas by the end of 2008 (with 400,000 IDPs returning in 2008 alone), two years after the government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. The conflict began in 1988, but most of the displacement dates back to 1996, when people were forced into camps under the government's "protected villages" policy, and 2002 and 2004, when military operations against the LRA caused further waves of displacement. Unknown numbers of people fled to towns and cities in other parts of Uganda.

Neighbouring Karamoja sub-region saw further displacement in 2008 due to inter-clan fighting among Karamojong pastoralists and an ongoing disarmament campaign by the army which was accompanied by human rights violations.

The sustainability of the return movements in northern Uganda is not yet guaranteed. The LRA's leader Joseph Kony repeatedly failed to show up to sign a final peace agreement, and while it carried out no attacks in northern Uganda in 2008, the LRA has continued to kill and abduct civilians in Southern Sudan, DRC and CAR from bases in DRC.

Moreover, while the situation in the IDP camps has been far from perfect, returnees face difficult circumstances in their home areas too, not least the severe lack of basic services, including access to clean water, clinics and schools. In Lira district of Lango sub-region, malnutrition and mortality rates increased from 2006 to 2007 as IDPs who had left the camps faced reduced access to food and services. Many children in the Acholi sub-region have stayed behind in the camps to continue their education, putting them at risk of abuse. There is an urgent need for infrastructure to enhance livelihood opportunities, for example by improving access to local markets.

Some returnees are facing difficulties in asserting their customary ownership of land, including widows, orphans and members of other vulnerable groups such as former child soldiers and single women with children born out of wedlock. Meanwhile, disputes between IDPs and the owners of land on which the camps were based have hampered local integration as a durable solution. The authorities have not done enough to solve these

disputes and so facilitate local integration; instead they have mainly pressed for return as the only durable solution.

A disproportionate number of the IDPs who are still in the camps are elderly, sick and disabled people, including people living with HIV/AIDS. They face serious obstacles in returning home, such as their inability to build a hut and lack of access to health care in the return areas. At the same time, the support structures in the camps are disintegrating because so many other people have returned home. While guidelines for the phasing out of camps have been adopted, at the end of 2008 the authorities had yet to develop a comprehensive plan for addressing these vulnerable people's needs.

To address the causes of the conflict, the government must develop the north to bring it up to the same levels as the rest of the country. However, the postponement of the implementation of the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda until July 2009 made this prospect more distant.

The impact of Uganda's national IDP policy has so far been limited. The policy designates the Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees and the District Disaster Management Committees as the national and local lead agencies for IDPs, but the government has allocated insufficient resources to these bodies. In practice the international humanitarian community has taken the lead in responding to the crisis.

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) has fulfilled a valuable role in protecting IDP rights through advising the government on the national IDP policy and reporting on the implementation of the policy in its annual reports to Parliament.

Uganda was one of the pilot countries for humanitarian reform, with the cluster approach being adopted in January 2006. UNHCR is the lead agency on protection. While the cluster approach has generally led to better coordination, humanitarian agencies and Uganda's donors have struggled to formulate an adequate strategy to manage the transition from emergency to recovery and development.

By the end of the year, the clusters were in the process of formulating phase-out strategies, and OCHA was planning to end its presence in northern Uganda by September 2009.