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UGANDA

Difficulties continue for returnees and remaining IDPs as development phase begins

In the four years passed since the signing of a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, return has taken place in northern Uganda at a rapid rate. More than 90 per cent of the 1.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs) who lived in camps at the height of the crisis have returned to their areas of origin or have resettled in new locations. Only an estimated 182,000 IDPs remain in camps or transit sites as of December 2010.

However, the sustainability of returns is in doubt. Despite lasting peace in the region since 2006, returns have outpaced recovery planning and implementation. Most IDPs have returned to areas offering few basic services such as water, health care and education facilities. Current and planned efforts notwithstanding, there is general agreement that it will take many years to rehabilitate northern Uganda.

The government and its international partners did not start to implement recovery programmes until 2008, and their impact is yet to be felt. By December 2010, the Consolidated Appeal for humanitarian support in 2010 was 49 per cent funded; this Appeal is expected to be the last. However, the implementation of big recovery and development programmes by government and development partners had begun.

By late 2010, an inter-agency Durable Solutions Assessment was underway in northern Uganda, to inform programming needs within the recovery context. The assessment is expected to be completed in early 2011. Meanwhile, there is increasing awareness that peace-building and reconciliation activities needs to feature more prominently in recovery efforts.

Background: War and displacement in northern Uganda

A history of antagonism and distrust between the Acholi people of northern Uganda and southern-based tribes dominating the government contributed to the formation of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in 1987, led by Joseph Kony. The LRA purportedly aimed to overthrow the government, currently led by president Yoweri Museveni, rebuild the Acholi nation and culture, and rule Uganda in accordance with the biblical ten commandments (LIU, 30 October 2003, p.33; RLP, February 2004, p.5; CSOPNU, 10 December 2004, p.28).

Large-scale displacement occurred in northern Uganda as a result of the government's policy from 1996 to force civilians into IDP camps, which it described as "protected villages", in the wake of two large-scale offensives, Operations "Iron Fist 1" and "Iron Fist 2" which the army launched against the LRA in October 2002 and March 2004. Around the time of "Iron First 1" the area affected by displacement expanded as the LRA moved eastwards into Lango and Teso sub-regions. By the end of 2005, a total of about 1.8 million people had been moved into IDP camps (Willet Weeks, March 2002, p.2; RLP, February 2004, p.25; CSOPNU, 10 December 2004, p.6 and 31 December 2004, p.1; HRW, 20 September 2005, p.10; Reuters, 21 February 2008).

In August 2006 the government and the LRA signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA), which resulted in substantial improvements in security and humanitarian access to affected populations in northern Uganda. Between May 2007 and February 2008 the parties signed a total of seven agreements (ICG, 14 September 2007). However, Kony failed to sign a final peace agreement in April 2008. The UN Secretary-General suspended the mandate of his Special Envoy for the LRA-affected areas in June 2009 (Security Council Report, 22 June 2009). Joseph

Kony and other commanders were indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2005, reducing the likelihood of the LRA engaging further in a negotiated settlement.

Ongoing threats to security

LRA activity has not been noted in northern Uganda since 2008. The LRA has, however, since then presented a regional security threat, carrying out attacks in the Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). A regional military offensive launched in December 2008, "Operation Lightning Thunder", failed to end atrocities by the LRA or capture its leader.

The LRA reportedly killed at least 2,385 civilians and abducted over 3,000 others in the central African region between September 2008 and November 2010, with attacks taking place in remote areas with limited communications, roads or other infrastructure. The actual number of victims is probably far higher (HRW, 11 November 2010)

In May 2010 the American government enacted The Lords Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Act, to support the stabilisation of areas affected by LRA violence, the protection of civilians, humanitarian relief and reconstruction, reconciliation and transitional justice (US Congress, 5 January 2010). In December 2010, President Obama launched a comprehensive strategy to address LRA activity across central Africa (Resolve, 3 December 2010).

The referendum to determine the status of Southern Sudan and the disputed Abyei area is scheduled to take place in January 2011. Contingency plans drawn up by the Government of Uganda and the UN indicate that direct implications for Uganda are expected to be limited. They have planned for up to 30,000 refugees in the first phase and up to a further 70,000 in the second phase of the post-referendum period (OCHA, 10 December 2010).

National elections are scheduled for February and March 2011. However, the elections are not expected to cause new displacement or other situations requiring humanitarian intervention (OCHA, November 2010).

Patterns of return

In Acholi and Teso sub-regions, 92 per cent of the 1.8 million people displaced into camps had returned home or resettled in other areas by December 2010 (Humanitarian Profile Uganda 2011, OCHA final draft 10 December 2010). According to UNHCR, as of October 2010, almost 1,160,000 IDPs had returned to their villages of origin and 70,000 IDPs had moved from camps to "transit sites" closer to their homes and land. A November update by UNHCR's Gulu office suggested the population in transit camps had fallen to around 52,000 (UNHCR, 1 November 2010).

In November 2010, there were still IDPs in 13 camps in the seven districts of Acholi sub-region (Amuru, Nwoya, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader and Agago) and in one camp in Teso sub-region. A total of 229 camps have been closed since 2007 (UNHCR, 19 November 2010).

Many of the IDPs still in camps are categorised as "extremely vulnerable individuals" (EVIs) including old and disabled people, or "persons with special needs". Factors hindering their departure include the presence of unexploded ordnance in return areas, the slow pace of demining, border conflicts with Southern Sudan, and cattle raids from the neighbouring Karamoja sub-region.

Return has been the settlement option preferred by most IDPs in northern Uganda. A survey by the Brookings/Bern Project on Internal Displacement and IDMC of local integration in northern Uganda (to be published in 2011) found that since the CHA in 2006 politicians have consistently lobbied and called for the return of IDPs to their homes.

The study also notes that most IDPs list their cultural ties to their land and region as the main reason to choose return over other settlement options.

The process of closing camps has been led by government and facilitated by UNHCR, using the Camp Phase-Out Guidelines issued by the government in 2008 (OPM, May 2008). Some owners of land on which camps were originally established have exerted pressure on IDPs to vacate the land. Landlords have never been compensated for the use of their land for camps, in spite of provisions to do so in Ugandan law; and there is little to suggest that compensation will ever be given except in the current form of government support to restore land formerly used for IDP camps (Brookings/Bern Project on Internal Displacement and IDMC of local integration in northern Uganda, to be published in 2011).

UNHCR intends to maintain a presence in northern Uganda through 2011, and focus on the EVIs still in camps. Whereas there is concern about this group's ability to freely choose and sustain the settlement option they desire, it is the pace of the recovery efforts in support of the IDPs who have left camps which elicits most concern as of December 2010.

Outstanding protection issues

Even though the large-scale movement of IDPs from the camps did not gain momentum until 2008, two years after the cessation of hostilities, the planning and implementation of activities to support their recovery have failed to keep pace with returns. Large recovery and development programmes in northern Uganda have been delayed for long periods; confusion about funding between the government and development partners has persisted, and there has been a lack of coordination between the government, the donors and the UN.

According to the UN's Consolidated Appeal for 2010, the situation of the 1.8 million people originally displaced cannot be characterised either as an end of displacement or the achievement of durable solutions. Vulnerability persists, which requires ongoing humanitarian assistance alongside effective recovery and development activities (OCHA, 30 November 2009, p.1).

OCHA notes that access to basic services has remained elusive for the majority of people in return areas. Inadequate health care infrastructure has left populations susceptible to epidemics, as demonstrated by the persistence of the Hepatitis E outbreak in Kitgum and the re-emergence of polio in Amuru. A higher than average HIV prevalence, second only to rates in Kampala, could lead to a pandemic in the absence or insufficiency of testing, treatment or counselling services. Water and sanitation coverage has remained poor, with latrines only accessible to 31 per cent of the population in Pader and Gulu, and even fewer in Lamwo and Amuru (OCHA, 10 December 2010, p.9). IDPs have reportedly gone back to camps to access basic services.

As of November 2010, international organisations and local government agencies were carrying out a "durable solutions assessment" to inform the planning of recovery activities. The assessment was due to be ready in early 2011 (UNHCR, November 2010).

Food security

Good first-season rains in 2010 led to above-average harvests. Improvement in the food security situation has been noted since 2008, with the population in Acholi moving from emergency to non-emergency phase (IPC, November 2010).

With the third highest population growth in the world and 90 per cent of its population depending on income earned from agriculture, Uganda is particularly vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters and changes in weather patterns,

leaving the most vulnerable regions, including Acholi, at risk of repeated reliance on humanitarian assistance.

The government has developed the National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management (still awaiting approval by the cabinet), which outlines the need to tackle disasters in a holistic manner with more emphasis on disaster risk reduction (OCHA, November 2010). In August, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) convened a response planning workshop facilitated jointly by WHO, FAO, WFP, UNICEF and OCHA, bringing together technical staff from line ministries, UN agencies and NGOs. In addition, the OPM and OCHA have assisted all districts in Acholi and Karamoja in developing district-based contingency plans against natural hazards.

Land issues

The resolution of land issues is one of the main challenges in post-conflict northern Uganda. Institutions are in place to mediate disputes but are not functioning well. Knowledge of the law is inadequate amongst the government officials at village level who are the first authority to deal with land disputes (Brookings/IDMC, forthcoming; IDMC interview with NRC, November 2010).

Customary law governs a great percentage of land in northern Uganda. The Land Act recognises customary tenure, but registries of ownership are not well maintained, land tribunals set up under the Land Act are defunct and caseloads have been transferred to the Chief Magistrate, creating a backlog and delay in resolving cases. Formal and informal fees to be paid for official assistance in settling land disputes are unaffordable for many IDPs (Brookings/IDMC, forthcoming; IDMC interview with NRC, November 2010)

With the discovery of large oil fields in northern Uganda, investors have reportedly bought huge tracts of land. Details of the transactions are not public, fostering suspicion about the investments

being made and whether they will benefit communities as part of regional economic recovery (IDMC interview with NRC, November 2010; IDMC interview with International Alert Uganda, November 2010).

Extremely vulnerable individuals

In Acholi culture, families traditionally care for their elders and vulnerable members. Following decades of war, many families are unable to cater for the needs of their old or disabled, on top of re-establishing their livelihoods and clearing land. The lack of basic services in return areas was also cited by some returnee respondents to the Brookings/IDMC survey as an obstacle to moving family members categorised as EVIs from remaining camps.

Until June 2010, most extremely vulnerable households received food aid. The NGO Help Age International in Gulu is as of December 2010 preparing to assess how they are coping without this aid. (Brookings/IDMC, forthcoming; IDMC interview with NRC, November 2010)

UNHCR and its operational partners plan to provide livelihoods training to vulnerable individuals in camps and may extend this training to transit sites in 2011, subject to funding (UNHCR, November 2010).

National response

Uganda has an elaborate policy framework for responding to internal displacement. It was one of the first countries in the world to develop a formal policy on IDPs. The national IDP policy, which was adopted in 2004, guarantees (in Section 3.4) the right of IDPs to freely choose between return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country. In May 2008 the government issued Camp Phase-Out Guidelines (OPM, May 2008), followed in June of the same year by Guidelines for the Demolition of Abandoned Structures. In

January 2010 Uganda became the first country to ratify the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa (also known as the Kampala Convention). Uganda has also ratified the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region (the Great Lakes Pact), including the Pact's IDP Protocol and the Protocol on the Property Rights of Returning Persons.

In October 2007 the government launched the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda. The PRDP was intended as a three-year framework to enable development and restore law and order in areas affected by conflict, in line with national standards. It had four strategic objectives: consolidation of state authority, rebuilding and empowering communities, revitalising the economy, peace building and reconciliation.

However, lack of funding and oversight mechanisms delayed the implementation of the PRDP until the fiscal year beginning in July 2009. By late 2010, the design of monitoring mechanisms was being completed, and the PRDP was expected to run until at least mid-2012 with a total budget of around \$600 million (OCHA, November 2010).

The government and its development partners have so far focused on "visible" recovery and development activities in northern Uganda, including rebuilding of infrastructure and consolidation of state authority. However, there is increasing recognition of the need to foster peace building activities between communities and between northern Ugandans and the rest of the country. Communities in northern Uganda have expressed great need for reparations and reconciliation, and links between essential service provision and the consolidation of state authority and peacebuilding would also help to address strong perceptions of marginalisation and lack of government responsiveness (USAID, October 2010, p.5).

In addition to the PRDP, two government programmes of importance to the recovery of northern Uganda are the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF). The latter programme is managed by the World Bank and will enter its second phase in January 2011 with a \$100 million budget over three years (IDMC interview with UNDP, November 2010).

The government holds the primary responsibility for recovery efforts in northern Uganda; this is realised through the OPM at central level and the district administrations locally.

The creation of new districts has continued across Uganda, and the original four Acholi districts have been sub-divided into seven over the past three years. The creation of new districts is formally intended to bring services closer to the people in a decentralised Uganda. The opposition, however, has criticised the government for depleting resources and so further reducing the capacity of district administrations and officials. Meanwhile, there is concern that involvement in the 2011 elections could impair the coordination and response capacities of district administrations, further delaying recovery efforts.

International response

2010 is the last year for a UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) in Uganda. By December only 49 per cent of the sum requested in the CAP for 2010 had been funded, up from 31 per cent in June (OCHA CAP website, accessed 8 December 2010).

In place of the Consolidated Appeal, an inter-agency working group which includes the OPM is in December 2010 developing a humanitarian profile paper to guide decisions on humanitarian action for 2011. The cluster system for coordinating humanitarian action, established for the Acholi region in early 2006, comes to an end on

31 December 2010. With government responsible for leading recovery and continued but decreasing humanitarian needs, all humanitarian coordination functions will be handed over to the government.

Early recovery planning has not been integrated into the work of other clusters, although this has been one of the objectives of the early recovery cluster. According to UNHCR, important development initiatives such as the Recovery and Development Initiative for Northern Uganda have focused primarily on commercial agriculture and manufacturing and have had little immediate impact for IDP returnees (UNHCR, 25 July 2010, p.63).

The UN launched the three-year Peacebuilding and Recovery Programme (UNPRAP) in June 2009, to align UN interventions with the PRDP and other government frameworks for northern Uganda (UN, 22 June 2009, p.4).

To facilitate effective coordination in northern Uganda, the UN Country Team in April 2010 devolved coordination to Area Coordinators (UNACs) who report to the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator. In Acholi, the UNAC is operational under the leadership of UNDP.

UNAC and the government will coordinate the implementation of a number of recovery and development initiatives by development partners. The World Bank is set to implement the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) with a budget of \$100 million over three years, plus roads. The British government is contributing financially to NUSAF and investing \$150 million over three years in the Post Conflict Development Programme in northern Uganda. USAID's Northern Uganda Development of Enhanced Local Governance Infrastructure and Livelihoods (NUDEIL) is a \$30 million three-year programme operating in three districts. The European Union's \$20 million Agricultural Livelihood Recovery Project (ALREP), is operating in ten districts for

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two years. The African Development Bank is contributing to rural infrastructure. The Japanese government is working with the Ugandan government to improve infrastructure, while Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Ireland are giving direct budget support to the government plus direct NGO assistance (UNDP, November 2010).

Note: This is a summary of IDMC's internal displacement profile on Uganda. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people.

In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org.

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