



Humanitarian Update

Volume VI, Issue V

May 2004

General outlook

- I. Security**
- II. Refugee Issues**
- III. IDP Movement and Camp Issues**
- IV. Access Issues**
- V. Humanitarian situation and assistance**
- VI. Missions and Visits**
- VII. Affected populations**

I. SECURITY

SECURITY OVERVIEW

The conflict in northern Uganda continues to destroy livelihoods, resulting in further displacement and increasing vulnerability. The situation of over 1.6 million people sheltering in 104 crowded camps in four districts (Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Lira) is Uganda's worst humanitarian crisis.

During the reporting period, Operation Iron Fist Phase II intensified, with significant army reinforcements in the Acholi sub-region districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader. In the Sudan, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) has reportedly driven the LRA out of their military bases in the Imatong Mountains. The LRA are said to have moved into the Kit valley near Juba, while a larger group under Vincent Otti has moved into Gulu district around Kilak hills. The LRA are now more mobile and their movement difficult to monitor, which could explain the new wave of attacks in Gulu and Kitgum districts during the past month.

In May, rebel presence continued to be reported in many parts of these districts, and this was characterized by several attacks on villages and IDP camps, road ambushes and frequent attacks on Kitgum town suburbs, all resulting in the death and abduction of civilians. In Kitgum, rebels infiltrated the town and shelling was a common phenomenon during the last week of May. In one of the raids, rebels abducted the Anglican Bishop of Kitgum diocese, but the UPDF (the national army) rescued him.

Lira district and Teso sub-region (constituting Soroti, Katakwi and Kaberamaido districts), however, remained generally calm. In Lira, there was very minimal rebel movement, while Teso continued to enjoy relative peace with no reports of LRA attacks, although cattle raids remained a source of insecurity, particularly in Kapelebyong county in Katakwi district. Furthermore, a 13-year-old boy surrendered with a pistol to the Arrow militia in Tubur sub-county. He informed security authorities that the LRA high command had sent him and five other boys, armed with pistols, to map out areas where UPDF soldiers are based, and to monitor the WFP food distribution pattern. The incident caused a lot of concern among IDPs who fear that the LRA might attack Teso again in June, a year after their incursion of the region.

ATTACKS ON IDP CAMPS

Overall, in spite of the increased military operations in southern Sudan and northern Uganda, and the deployment of local militia, the LRA have continued terrorizing the population. The LRA attacks on IDP camps during the reporting period targeted the smaller less protected (unrecognised) camps. The following camps were attacked:

- **Odek camp, Gulu district** – An estimated 200-300 rebels attacked the camp, located 75km east of Gulu town, on 29 April, killing 24 IDPs and abducting more than 110. Three UPDF soldiers and three rebels were also killed. Most of the abducted IDPs later returned, while about 33 IDPs are still unaccounted for. Odek is a non-official/non-gazetted camp.
- **Pagak camp, Gulu district** – About 100-150 rebels attacked Pagak camp, located 24km north-west of Gulu town, on 16 May, killing 39 IDPs, most of whom were women and children, five UPDF soldiers and three rebels. The rebels abducted an unconfirmed number of IDPs and burnt about 544 huts. Most IDPs relocated to camps in Lacor and within the municipality, while others only spend the day in Pagak and commute to other camps in the evening.
- **Palabek Gem camp, Kitgum district** – An estimated 200-250 rebels attacked the camp in Lamwo county on 16 May. One IDP and two rebels were killed, eight children, ranging in age from six to 16 years, abducted, 105 huts burnt and 505 households looted. There were reportedly very few UPDF soldiers in the area at the time, leaving civilians relatively unprotected. Prior to the attack, there had been a lot of rebel movements near the camp with limited response by the army. The rebels killed five people found gathering food.
- **Lukodi camp, Gulu district** – About 100 rebels attacked Lukodi, a non-gazetted camp, located about 15km north of Gulu town, on 20 May. The rebels killed 42 IDPs, abducted an unconfirmed number, and burnt 210 huts.

NIGHT COMMUTERS

The increased attacks on villages and IDP camps throughout Gulu and Kitgum districts has led to a significant increase in the number of night commuters. Gulu district has about 21,000 night commuters, compared to about 21,248 reported in April, and 18,505 in March. Lacor hospital alone in Gulu has reported an increase from 5,000 to 12,000 in just one month. Kitgum has a total of 20,000 night commuters in various locations of the districts, and in Pader, there are about 11,000 night commuters in Kalongo alone.

OTHER SECURITY HIGHLIGHTS

- Several LRA commanders, along with their fighters, voluntarily surrendered during the month. Most of these were abducted as children more than 10 years ago. Their decision to abandon the rebellion has largely been attributed to the increased military pressure on the LRA since the start of Operation Iron Fist II, as well as the Amnesty Act.
- There was massive recruitment of civilians by the UPDF, into the Local Defence Forces in Gulu after the district rejected the formation of parallel militia forces similar to the Arrow and Amuka Boys, and Frontier Guards of Teso, Lira and Kitgum respectively.
- The Sudan peace agreement was signed between the SPLA and the Sudan Government on 26 May. It is hoped that this would impact positively on the security situation in northern Uganda.

II. REFUGEE ISSUES

The LRA launched 31 raids on UNHCR refugee settlements between February 21 and May 21 2004, displacing some 32,000 Sudanese refugees from the southern Zoka Forest Belt in Adjumani district (north-western Uganda). The refugees have since resettled some 30-40km northwards, in the Nile River Belt. Leaving their homes and fields unattended, these displaced refugees doubled the population of the Nile River Belt and put a strain on food, water, schools, sanitation and medical services. The UNHCR Self Reliance Strategy, a joint program between UNHCR and the Government of Uganda (GoU), which aims at making refugees self reliant in food, education and other life necessities, is under threat due to this migration. Nonetheless, with assistance from WFP and other agencies in the field, the emergency has not come to any critical proportion. UNHCR and the UPDF are currently formulating a campaign to send refugees back to their homes in the Zoka Forest Belt.

In Hoima district (western Uganda), increased numbers of Congolese nationals are entering Uganda via Lake Albert due to continued instability in the DRC. This increased migration has sparked concern within the GoU, as much of this population is unaccounted for. UNHCR is stepping up efforts to register Congolese in Hoima district, but is facing a difficult task as many Congolese nationals are unaware of what UNHCR registration and benefits entail. Many of these Congolese refuse to register for fear of being singled out and forcibly sent back to DRC. UNHCR will step up its efforts with a future information program.

III. IDP MOVEMENT AND CAMP ISSUES

In the wake of the recent spate of LRA attacks in Acholi sub-region, most IDPs have fled the affected camps and relocated to others perceived to be safer. Lukodi camp in Gulu, for instance, has been completely deserted and the IDPs have relocated to Chope camp, Laliya centre and Gulu municipality. The UPDF has advised that Odek camp in Gulu be decongested into Awere and Acet camps for better protection.

In Teso, some IDPs have left their camps in the sub-counties and set up 'new' camps, especially in Orungo sub-county, in parishes where Arrow militia are deployed. In Soroti district, IDPs are still in camps within the municipality, and there is little evidence of people returning to their areas of origin. However, an inter-agency re-verification of IDPs in Soroti municipality was completed, with preliminary figures indicating that the current IDP population is nearly half the number that has been cited in recent months. It is not clear whether this is a reduction resulting from the return of IDPs to their areas of origin, or an indication that the earlier statistics were inaccurate. An inter-agency committee is analysing the various factors and will agree on a final figure.

In Lira, given the improvement in security, IDPs are highly mobile. Most IDP movement is reportedly towards the rural areas, mainly to cultivate. In some camps (e.g. Bata) most IDPs have reportedly returned home, although this movement is not permanent since they split their families in two, leaving the children in the camps while the adults go to the rural areas to attend to their gardens. There are 13 gazetted/recognized camps in Lira municipality and 29 rural camps. It has been agreed that a new approach be explored to move the relocation/decongestion process forward. Erute remains a priority on the list of camps to be relocated/decongested.

NON-GAZETTED/UNRECOGNISED/UNOFFICIAL CAMPS

An issue of growing concern is that of unrecognised camps in the conflict-affected districts, and particularly in the Acholi sub-region. Such camps have lately been easy targets for the LRA, as they have very few, if any UPDF soldiers or local militia protecting them. There is an ongoing appeal among the humanitarian community to the GoU and the army to provide adequate security for both recognized and unrecognised camps, as efforts continue to either remove the non-gazetted camps or to formally recognize them. Furthermore, some non-gazetted camps do not receive any humanitarian assistance and the residents are living extremely deprived lives. In Pader, for instance, there are eight non-gazetted camps with thousands of IDPs going without any form of humanitarian assistance. In Patongo (Pader), the IDP population without any assistance has risen from 8,000 to 84,000, according to Pader district authorities.

IV. ACCESS ISSUES

ACCESS TO CAMPS

During the reporting period, insecurity in the Acholi sub-region continued to hamper operations of several humanitarian agencies, and, as a result, most activities were limited to the municipalities and nearby camps. Few agencies, some using military escorts, and others relying on UPDF and other sources of security intelligence, were able to implement their programmes in distant camps. On several occasions, particularly in Kitgum and Pader districts, some NGOs were unable to go to IDP camps because the UPDF was unable to provide military escorts in spite of the agencies

having submitted their plans to the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) long in advance. In Lira and Teso, however, the improvement in security has reflected positively on access to rural camps. In Lira though, NGOs are still advised to use military escorts for all operations in rural camps.

Apart from the insecurity, bad roads in the region have impeded movement of some humanitarian agencies in serving the displaced population. In Kitgum and Pader districts, WFP has reported very poor road conditions in Namukora, Kalongo, Mucwini and Agoro, which hinder the agency from reaching all camps in its monthly cycle.

ACCESS TO FARMLAND

It is becoming increasingly difficult for IDPs in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader to access their gardens, as the LRA rebels have vowed to kill anyone found cultivating or harvesting. In Lira, however, as mentioned above (see IDP Movements), IDPs are now able to access their fields to a fair extent, while in Teso, access to farmland has continued to improve, even without escort.

V. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND ASSISTANCE

FOOD SECURITY

In view of the increasing rebel presence and attacks on IDP camps in the Acholi sub-region, the UPDF has restricted movement outside the camps, hence limiting access to farmland. The food security situation varies from camp to camp depending on the prevailing security situation, which allows or hinders agencies' access to camps to distribute food aid, and IDPs' access to farmland. In some areas, IDPs are able to move into the countryside because of the effective UPDF patrols, while in others, rebels have been targeting IDPs who venture out of the camps. In yet other areas, the UPDF provides security advice to IDPs going to their fields. On the whole, the army has advised IDPs to cultivate along the main roads, and landowners in these areas have been encouraged to give or rent their land to the IDPs. In most camps in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, IDPs are only able to access land around the camps within a radius of 3-4 km only. On average IDPs have access to only 0.3 acres of land, and the average farm size is about 40 by 100 meters.

The first rains have started in Gulu and limited planting is taking place. FAO plans to distribute farm inputs (hoes and seeds – beans, maize, eggplant, okra, cabbage, cow peas) to at least 58,000 households in Gulu, Kitgum Lira and Pader districts. Agencies interested in working as FAO's implementing partners have submitted proposals for the programme planned for the second planting season this year (starting July). FAO has already identified Hunger Alert as an implementing partner for Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Lira.

Other agencies that are planning interventions for the second planting season include: AVSI, CPAR, German Agro Action (GAA), ICRC and the Uganda Red Cross Society. UNDP is planning food security intervention in Gulu. In Kitgum and Pader, the first rains have ended, although there is little hope for a large harvest.

In Teso, while IDPs have had access to farmland, and seeds and agricultural tools have been distributed to about 25000 households, the rains were disappointingly light and short. As such, the harvest is expected to be low and IDPs will continue to largely depend on WFP for their food needs.

WFP increased in the food ration from 65% to about 80% in northern Uganda to fill the current food gaps. However, WFP faces a shortfall of 58,376 tons of food commodities (45,956 tons cereals, 8,517 tons pulses, 3,776 tons CSB and 127 tons vegetable oil) from June through December 2004. A cereals shortfall is anticipated in August, while current stocks of pulses will last until late September. Fortified blended food stocks available are sufficient to meet the needs of the school feeding, nutrition and HIV/AIDS programmes, although they were removed from the general ration.

WFP urgently requires US\$ 31 million in generous contributions to continue providing relief assistance to over 1.6 million people through December 2004.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Ebola outbreak in Sudan:

An Ebola outbreak was reported in southern Sudan, causing concern in Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and the other districts that share the border with Sudan. However, no cases in Uganda have been reported since the outbreak. WHO and the Ministry of Health have been working with the District Directors of Health Services (DDHS) and measures have been put in place to temporarily control movements along the Uganda-Sudan border. Medical workers in the districts are on the alert, and in Gulu, an Ebola preparedness task force was established.

Child Days:

May marked the beginning of "Child Days", a UNICEF-supported Ministry of Health initiative to accelerate routine health service activities using outreach systems in place at the district level. All the emergency districts have prepared plans and the required supplies (vaccines, record books etc) have been delivered to the respective districts. Activities include de-worming programmes and provision of high doses of Vitamin A for children aged six months to five years, living in IDP camps in conflict-affected areas. The programme took off in Lira district, where activities included immunization and administration of Vitamin A and de-worming tablets. In Kitgum, however, the programme did not take off because of inadequate funds. Several agencies, including UNICEF, IMC, ACET, and World Vision are working to try to avail the funds required for the programme to start.

Nutrition:

Nutritional surveys carried out by MSF (France and Holland) indicate that malnutrition is increasing in IDP camps in the conflict-affected districts due to inadequate food intake. The nutrition support programmes are ongoing, although they have registered default rates due to the mobility of IDPs.

Up to 11 Therapeutic Feeding Centres (TFCs) in the conflict-affected districts are receiving support from UNICEF, with approximately 700 children being admitted per month. UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Health, WFP and ACF, has contributed to a standardised TFC reporting system, the training of staff and nutritional surveys.

Availability of drugs and health personnel:

Shortage of essential drugs and absenteeism of health personnel in the few functional health facilities are major problems in the conflict-affected districts. In Obalanga camp, Katakwi district, for instance, there are only two nurses, one clinical officer and one midwife for a population of about 36,000 IDPs. The situation is no different in other areas, resulting in the few operational medical NGOs being overwhelmed. Another serious concern in the health sector is the lack of storage facilities, including refrigerators, to store the highly perishable drugs such as vaccines. In Kitgum, UNEPI has agreed to provide new refrigerators for health units in the district.

HIV/AIDS and other diseases:

- Northern Uganda continues to have the highest HIV/AIDS prevalent rates in the country, ranging from 9.3% in Kitgum to more than 13% in Gulu, compared to the national average of 6%.
- The most common diseases in the IDP camps include: malaria, pneumonia, cough and skin and eye infections. Cases of sleeping sickness have also been reportedly on the increase in Kaberamaido district.
- There was a rabies outbreak in Kitgum during the month and some people were infected. The district acted swiftly by buying drugs, carrying out vaccination and killing stray dogs.

WATER AND SANITATION

Provision of water for IDPs remains a major challenge in all the conflict-affected districts. Generally, there is inadequate water supply (few safe water points); low latrine coverage (e.g. only 5% in Kitgum); few trained water source caretakers resulting in poor maintenance; lack of trained pump mechanics; and lack of detergents. Most camps also have very poor garbage disposal and drainage facilities, despite efforts by health and sanitation agencies to promote hygiene in IDP camps.

Interventions:

Agency interventions during the month included installation and repair of boreholes and shallow wells, although the distribution of water and sanitation facilities varies among IDP camps/sub-counties and in many cases does not match the population size. Agencies involved in this sector have asked the districts to include IDP camps in their plans for water and sanitation development. OXFAM carried out an assessment on water and sanitation in Kaberamaido district, the findings of which are yet to be released. Some NGOs have started self-help projects, where IDPs are encouraged to build latrines using materials provided by the agencies. In some cases, mobile toilets have been relocated to areas with very high demand. However, agencies in the sector have indicated a need for more traditional pit latrines rather than mobile ones, which are said to fill much faster and are difficult to clean and maintain. Mobile toilets are also very expensive to transport to sites.

EDUCATION

Poor performance of students in the past has been blamed on insecurity and the non-conducive learning environment in the region. In response, the Ministry of Education plans to put up more temporary learning centres in IDP camps in an effort to reduce on crowding in the host schools. UNICEF has also stepped up its support for the education sector by committing funds for the additional learning centres. WFP also plans to continue with the school-feeding programme in primary schools, although it has not taken off in any of the districts in Teso sub-region. Other planned interventions by various agencies include sponsorship, training teachers in psychosocial support and children's rights.

Besides congestion of learning centres, another major challenge facing the sector is the unwillingness of teachers to report to their posts in the rural areas even in Lira, Soroti and Katakwi districts where security has improved. The education sector working groups in the various districts are studying the issue with a view of finding ways of encouraging teachers to resume work.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROTECTION

Security in IDP camps:

The problem of inadequate security for IDPs, including those in camps and the night commuters and open-air dwellers remains at the forefront of the calls to the government and UPDF to improve protection of IDPs. The recent wave of LRA attacks on IDP camps, particularly those that are unofficial/non-gazetted, exposed the great risk facing IDPs. Furthermore, some military detachments are located in the centre of the camps (e.g. Amuru), and the IDPs feel insecure, as such an arrangement tends to leave the people at the edges of the camps, which are the most vulnerable areas, unprotected. The need for government to ensure protection of the displaced population whether or not they are living in recognized camps, cannot be over-emphasized.

Night commuters and open-air dwellers:

In Kitgum and Pader, where the "night commuter" and "open dweller" phenomena are not as old as in Gulu, the districts are trying to find ways of coping with the problem. In Kitgum, the sectoral committee on protection has resolved that more shelters should be put up for night commuters. Meanwhile, some of the 650 open-air dwellers in the district have begun voluntarily re-locating to Labuje camp.

Other key areas of concern:

Other protection issues that raised concern during the reporting period included the following:

- There is recruitment of child soldiers, especially returnees who do not have alternative sources of livelihood.
- The UPDF soldiers are sometimes very harsh in trying to enforce curfews and limits beyond which IDPs can move outside the camps.
- There are several cases of illegal arrest, detention and torture, although there is need for concrete evidence if the army is to address the problem.
- Sexual exploitation, rape, and early marriage are rampant in camps, and sometimes the perpetrators have been found to be the people charged with the responsibility of protecting the IDPs.
- **Land issues:** Many owners of the land on which IDP camps are located have started demanding compensation for their land. NRC will undertake a study on land issues in for Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader.
- Many children, especially in Teso, are ready to be united with their families but the government structure mandated to carry out tracing and resettlement of children (the Probation Office) is not facilitated well enough to effectively perform this role.
- There is a new category of juvenile delinquency in municipalities in Teso.

Interventions:

- In May, the Human Rights and Protection Working Group was officially formed in Gulu.
- In Lira, the major activities for the month included child rehabilitation and integration, home visits and counselling. UNICEF has asked the agencies involved in provision of psychosocial support services and protection to write proposals for capacity building.
- In Teso, UNICEF has contracted the Trans-cultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) to address trauma in the community. TPO has opened an office in Soroti to provide psychosocial support and trauma healing to IDPs in the three district of Soroti, Katakwi and Kaberamaido.

VI. MISSIONS AND VISITS

Gulu and Lira districts received a number of missions during the month. Through meetings with NGOs, UN agencies and district authorities, the missions focused on the ongoing humanitarian interventions, government's contribution, the gaps in and challenges to service delivery and new areas for interventions and commitment for continued funding. The missions also included field visits to IDP camps. The increasing number of missions to northern Uganda is perhaps an indication of the improved level of awareness on the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the increased interest in the conflict by the international community. The following missions took place during the month:

- An ECHO/EU delegation visited Lira and emphasised the need for modern technologies in the provision of humanitarian assistance, especially water.
- The Deputy British High Commissioner and officials from the British Foreign Office and DFID visited Gulu on 19 May to review the humanitarian situation. They met district authorities and officials of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and Mega FM radio. The team later proceeded to Adjumani.
- The UNDP/BCPR mission was in Gulu on 19-20 May for an assessment on how to improve the livelihood of IDPs. The team met with NGOs, CBOs, district officials, ARLPI officials, and Acholi traditional leaders. They visited Unyama camp. The team later proceeded to Lira district and held discussions with district officials, NGO representatives and the IDP community in Erute.
- The UNICEF Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy visited Gulu and inaugurated the UNICEF/OCHA office there. She visited Lira district on 26 May and toured Erute and Bala Stock camps.
- A German delegation led by the Deputy Director General of the African Department in the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development visited Gulu on 27-28 May to assess the humanitarian situation. They met with district officials, ARLPI officials, the PCY Project and SOS officials. They visited Pagak and Awer camps. This was the fifth visit by German officials to Gulu since February 2004. A mission by five German members of

Parliament to Gulu that had been scheduled for 15-16 May was, however, cancelled on security grounds.

- The European Union Head of Delegation in Uganda made a low profile visit to Gulu from 26-28 May. He met with district officials, agencies, ARLPI officials and human rights organizations, and visited Paicho camp.

VII. AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Affected Populations			
District	Beneficiary type	March/April 2004	Trend
Adjumani	Refugees (Su)	61,901	**
Arua	Refugees		
	Imvepi (Su, Br, DRC)	19,092	**
	Rhino (Su, DRC, Ky, Ng)	26,173	**
	Madi Okollo	6,928	**
Yumbe	Ikafe	7,874	**
Hoima	Refugees-Kyangwali (DRC, Su, Rw, Ky, Br, So)	17,226	**
Kabarole	Refugees–Kyaka II (DRC)	6,066	**
Katakwi	IDPs	144,945	**
Soroti	IDPs	42,220	DOWN
Kaberamaido	IDPs	97,560	**
Gulu	IDPs	438,639	**
Kitgum	IDPs	267,078	**
Pader	IDPs	279,526	**
Lira rural Camps	IDPs	212,139	**
Lira Municipality	IDPs	81,857	**
Mbarara	Refugees,		
	Oruchinga (Rw)	4,258	**
	Nakivale (DRC,Rw,So,Ky,Et,Su,Br)	15,304	**
Masindi	Refugees		
	Kiryandongo (Su)	14,184	**
Moroto, Kotido & Nakapiripirit	Drought Affected	**	**
Moyo	Refugees Palorinya (Su)	31,520	**
Urban	Refugees (mix)	134	**
Total Refugees		210,660	**
Total IDPs		1,563,964	DOWN
Total Drought Affected		**	**
Total Affected Population		1,774,624	DOWN

Note:

- The contents of this Update do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations. Sources for the Update include Government, UN, NGOs, donors, IOs and news agencies.

- Figures for the displaced people do not reflect “night commuters” in the towns. It should also be noted that the figures, especially in Teso and Lango regions fluctuate according to the prevailing security.
- The refugee figures are as of end March 2004 and IDP figures as of end May 2004.
- The trend will remain as ** unless there is a change (either increase or decrease) of 500 people.

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