

COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Country: Uganda

Planning Year: 2003

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

1.1 Context and Beneficiary Populations

UNHCR's long presence in Uganda dates from the 1960s. Though the earlier arrivals of Rwandan refugees had returned in 1994, the country still hosts about 17,220 Rwandans who are residual caseloads of the 1996 repatriation from Tanzania and other new arrivals. The majority of the refugees in the country today are southern Sudanese hosted in northern Uganda and who number about 158,100 (86%) of a total population of some 184,360 refugees. There are also about 8,100 DRC refugees hosted in the Southwest. Other smaller groups from Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya are also catered for. Sudanese and Congolese (DRC) refugees are received on *prima facie* basis, while the status of others is ascertained through individual refugee status determination. Almost all the refugees fled from persecution caused by ethnic rivalries and political differences in their countries of origin.

The Government of Uganda, through the Minister for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, carries out a liberal refugee policy. Refugees had been availed land for farming with the objective to allow them to become self-sufficient. As a result, refugees in the northern settlements have been able to produce a certain percentage of their food requirements, thus correspondingly reducing the food handouts from WFP. As there appears to be no significant change in land availed to refugees, it is expected that the same effort towards self-sufficiency in food will continue in the planning year. This degree of self-sufficiency was at times negatively affected by unfavourable climatic conditions.

It should be noted that northern Uganda, where the large majority of refugees are settled, remains to be economically marginalised and continues to suffer from constant rebel attacks of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA). This phenomenon has also prevented refugees from accessing farmlands located at reasonable distances from the settlements. Refugee settlements on the fringes are often attacked, abducted and food looted. Since rebel attacks do not exclusively target refugees, nationals too suffer. For the planning year, UNHCR Uganda has therefore taken into consideration precautionary security measures for staff, partners and the operation as a whole to the extent possible. The Government of Uganda does provide the necessary security for settlements as well as for nationals in the rebel prone areas though it has proved difficult to secure all areas. The hit-and-run nature of the attacks exacerbates the situation.

The registered Sudanese refugees hosted in Adjumani and Moyo districts of northern Uganda number about 83,270. Of this total, about 93 percent come from Eastern and Western Equatoria regions. Only 7 percent come from Bah-el-Gazal and the Upper Nile regions. The majority comes from an agricultural background while the pastoralist Dinkas are also represented. Movement of refugees from Sudan in the last two years has not been significant and UNHCR does not expect great influxes for the planning year provided the current stalemate continues. The recently improving relationship between Sudan and Uganda (March 2002) and the fact that Sudan has allowed the Ugandan army (UPDF) to pursue LRA inside Southern Sudan, might generate an influx following confrontation between the UPDF and LRA. One cannot rule out the possible repercussion the presence of SPLA in the vicinity might have. The few thousands who arrived in the districts of Moyo and Arua in the more

recent past are still mentioning the cause of their flight as the on-going war. Possible causes that may trigger a big influx into northern Uganda are as follows:

- Some armed factions traditionally allied to the governing National Islamic Front (NIF) in the south are now openly questioning their *raison d'être* in the war against the South. This defiant attitude has positioned these former allies against the more zealous government militia of the Popular Defence Force. In the last two three years, allegiances to Khartoum and SPLA have been shifting, leaving the situation very unpredictable.
- Another factor could be the high altitude bombing of the Government of Sudan in the South to destabilise the administration of the SPLA controlled areas.
- Some views have been expressed about the ambivalent attitude of the SPLA leadership in the face of the newly evolving policy of the “New Sudan” as opposed to the original objective and purpose of “self-determination.”

The implication of the above scenario for the planning year generates the need for constant analysis of the political developments in Sudan and periodic revision of the Contingency Plan for the North. The assessment to be done could be carried out through co-ordination with Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) through the Regional Director's Office, field visits to Southern Sudan and through information to be gathered from NGOs operational in Southern Sudan.

The 17,220 Rwandan refugees hosted in the south-west are mainly under care and maintenance due to land shortage. Their level of self-sufficiency in food is not comparable to that of the settlements in the north. The South West of Uganda is densely populated and hence in the last two years there have been considerable encroachments by nationals on land designated for refugees. Nakivale and Oruchinga are the two main Rwandan settlements. Oruchinga, the most productive in terms of agriculture could not easily accommodate all the needy while, Nakivale is not suitable for agriculture.

The recent developments that are taking place in Tanzania with regard to Rwandan and Burundian refugees may discourage the VOLREP of Rwandan refugees from Uganda. Apparently, both Rwandan and Burundian refugees in Tanzania are reportedly being told by the Government to be ready for repatriation in the next six months. UNHCR Uganda's main concern is with Rwandan refugees who have been coming into the south west (Nakivale settlement in Mbarara district) in 2001 and are still coming in during the current year. The Government of Uganda is recognising most of those who have been arriving.

The Congolese from DRC who are hosted in Kyaka II, Kyangwali and Nakivale are about 7,700. A good number of those in Kyaka II and Kyangwali are heading for food self-sufficiency. For 2002, there were some hopes for VOLREP to the DRC following the peace talks in the region. UNHCR is yet to witness a breakthrough in these talks in the course of the current year to plan for any eventual repatriation in mid year and/or in the planning year.

The Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) that UNHCR Uganda has been following since 1999 in collaboration with the Government and Implementing Partners is paying dividends in improving the quality of asylum to some degree in the refugee settlements. Partial food self-sufficiency, albeit affected by intermittent dry spells, has, by and large been progressing. Integration of services for refugees with those provided for Ugandan nationals, like education and health, has made good progress. A favourable development towards integration of services which took place in 2001 was the formulation of the National Health Sector Strategic

Plan. Provisions in this plan are that it will be incorporated into the District Development Plan and will render services to both nationals and refugees.

All NGOs involved in the health and education sectors were included in this plan for 2003 and already some UNHCR funded activities have been shared with district line ministries. Similarly, in the education sector a joint proposal by the Ministry of Finance and UNHCR has been presented to the Education Sector Consultative Body to solicit the inclusion of refugees in the sectoral plans for the nation. This has already borne fruit, as in some refugee hosting districts the integration process into the national programme has taken place and refugee children are already benefiting from the Universal Primary Education (UPE).

The long awaited guidelines to be clarified by Government have just materialized at the beginning of the current year through an official letter from the Minister for Disaster Management and Refugees to all refugee-hosting districts to launch the SRS officially. As a result, integration of sectoral activities (based on the capacities of districts) has been integrated and sub-agreements have been signed with the districts. In the planning year, it is expected that more activities will be moved from NGO implementing partners in the interest of integration to reinforce the SRS. This will entail more government line ministries coming on board as UNHCR partners. The BO has therefore planned a series of training workshops to familiarise the new comers on UNHCR's financial and reporting requirements (some already in the pipeline for the current year). UNHCR believes that significant headway would be made in the planning year on SRS with the expected result of more integration and substantial reduction of parallel programmes in the operation.

An important step taken in the 2003 operational plan is to bring together the cross cutting policy priorities in education, community services and health sectors and to constantly underscore the protection linkages. For instance, health care for women and children, promotion of education for the girl child, HIV/AIDS programmes for adolescents, the community based approach to environmental concerns and programmes for refugees with special needs will all be streamlined through co-ordination mechanisms. This was as a result of an in-depth analysis of all provisions that led to common goals linked to the protection aspects of the refugee programme. It is hoped that besides the cost effectiveness to be realized, better services will be delivered. Service delivery standards will be established, reviewed and assessed during the planning year. Needless to emphasize that the integration process besides augmenting harmony between refugees and nationals will also encourage government to include refugees in the national or regional planning. An important comparative advantage on the part of UNHCR is, of course, a progressive move towards the assistance and protection of the protracted refugee caseload in Uganda.

1.2 Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

a) Sudanese Caseload:

Name of Beneficiary Population: Sudanese Refugees	
Main Goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure International Protection for all Sudanese refugees in Uganda. 2. Refugees attain complete or increased self-reliance. 3. Integration of refugee services into the national structures. 4. Ensure that all refugees have access to basic social facilities and services. 	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rights of refugees are well protected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host government made aware of the refugee law and officials trained through different forums. • Raised awareness of refugee communities on the existing laws of the host country. • Victims of insecurity resettled in third countries or relocated to safer refugee settlements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development agencies are encouraged to incorporate the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) into their programmes for refugees and Ugandan nationals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sectors out-sourced to development agencies and implemented in favour of both refugees and nationals. • Integrated system of service delivery to both refugees and nationals put in place.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity of refugee and host communities to maintain peace and become self-supporting and responsible to their members with special needs, including women, elderly and disabled, adolescents and children is increased. • Promote resettlement opportunities wherever possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of refugees with special needs in community activities increased. • Opportunities for skills training and income generating activities in refugee and host communities increased. • Peaceful coexistence of refugees and nationals in refugee hosting areas improved. • Cases meeting resettlement criteria presented to resettlement countries.

b) Rwandan Caseload:

Name of Beneficiary Population: Rwandan Refugees	
Main Goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure International Protection for all Rwandan refugees in Uganda. 2. Ensure that all refugees have access to basic social facilities and services, including care and maintenance assistance. 3. Facilitate voluntary repatriation, whenever possible. 	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees receive multi-sectoral assistance and their self-sufficiency in food production is encouraged. • Promote resettlement opportunities wherever possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic social infrastructure and services put in place. • Activities to strengthen livelihood at household level, like income generation, implemented. • SRS wherever feasible expanded and CM changed to LS assistance. • Cases meeting resettlement criteria presented to resettlement countries.

c) Congolese Caseload:

Name of Beneficiary Population: Congolese Refugees	
Main Goal(s): 1. Ensure International Protection for all Congolese refugees in Uganda. 2. Congolese refugees benefit from care and maintenance and local settlement assistance, as appropriate. 3. Depending on progress in the DRC peace process, facilitate voluntary repatriation.	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees benefit from multi-sectoral assistance, and where possible, their self-sufficiency in food production is increased. • Whenever possible, the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees is facilitated. • Promote resettlement opportunities wherever possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential services available, basic needs met and self-sufficiency increased. • Refugees sensitised on the situation back home. • List of refugee families willing to repatriate drawn up and refugees assisted to return home. • Cases meeting resettlement criteria presented to resettlement countries.

d) Urban Caseload:

Name of Beneficiary Population: Urban Refugees	
Main Goal(s): 1. Ensure International Protection for all urban refugees in Uganda. 2. Ensure that urban refugees achieve a certain level of self-reliance, while providing the necessary assistance, as required.	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills training for some urban refugees and asylum seekers in Kampala is vigorously promoted in order to make them more self-reliant. • Promote resettlement opportunities wherever possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic needs assessment carried out. • Types of skills training selected and put in place. • Cases meeting resettlement criteria presented to resettlement countries.