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## UGANDA

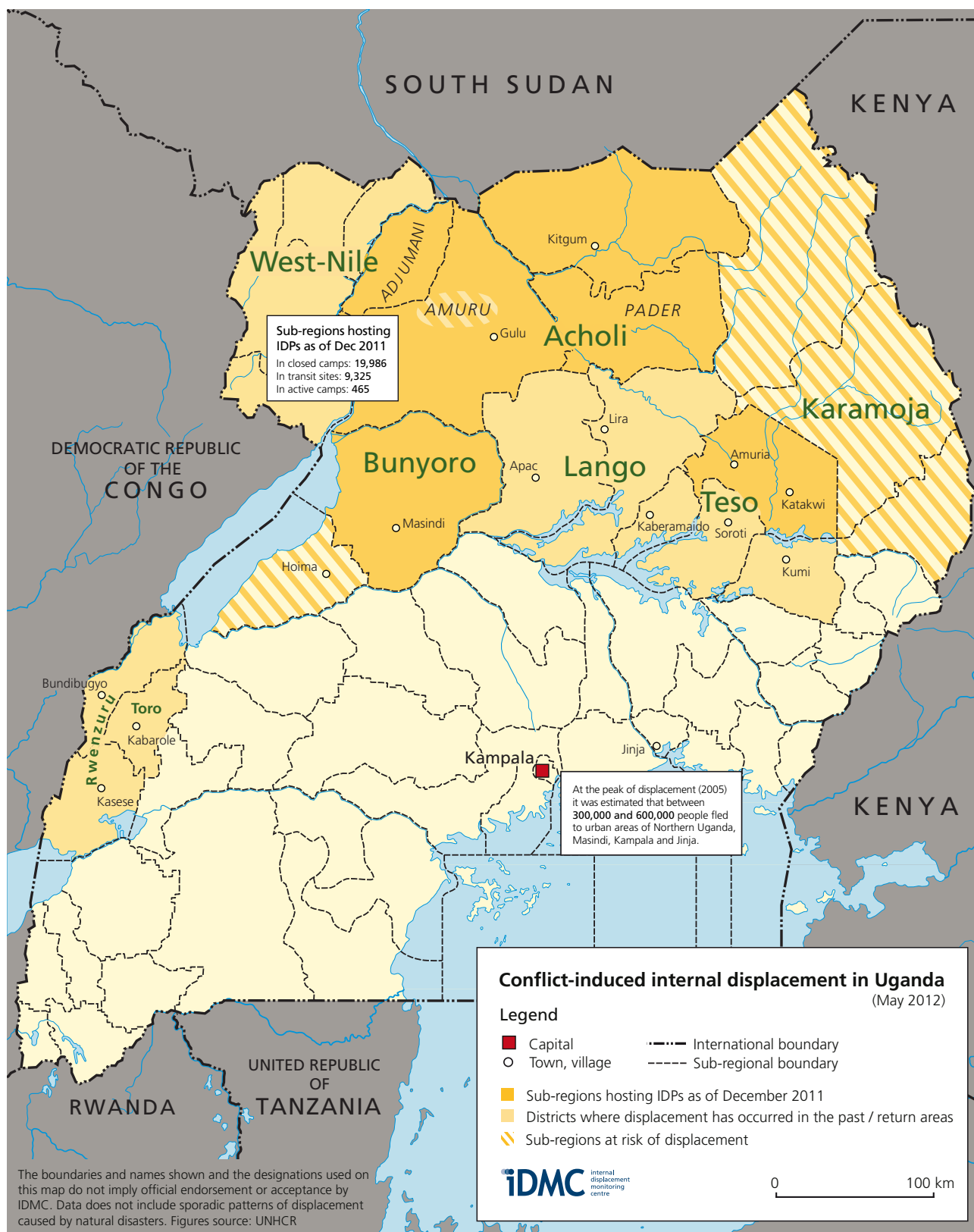
# Need to focus on returnees and remaining IDPs in transition to development

Since the 2006 signing of a cease-fire agreement between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army there has been significant return of those displaced by conflict in northern Uganda. The overwhelming majority 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 resettled in new locations. Driven by their cultural ties to the land and the region, most have opted for return. The majority of the 30,000 still confined to camps lack financial resources to move home, are aged, disabled or unwell or have no land to return to. Support for recovery and development in areas to which IDPs have returned has been insufficient. Returnees have faced continuing difficulties due to inadequate basic services and limited support to rebuild their livelihoods. The return process has been marred by land conflicts, sometimes leading to violence.

Uganda has forged policies to respond to internal displacement and foster durable solutions. The government's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda sets out a comprehensive approach to support reconstruction and IDP return. In practice however, this, and other ambitious recovery and development programmes in northern Uganda, have suffered protracted delays. Considerable resources have been invested but positive impacts to enable IDPs to find durable solutions remain limited.

Now that international humanitarian agencies have scaled down their activities development actors must focus efforts on ensuring that remaining IDPs and returnees are helped to pursue durable solutions.

# Conflict-induced internal displacement in Uganda



Source: IDMC  
 More maps are available at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

## Background: War and displacement in northern Uganda

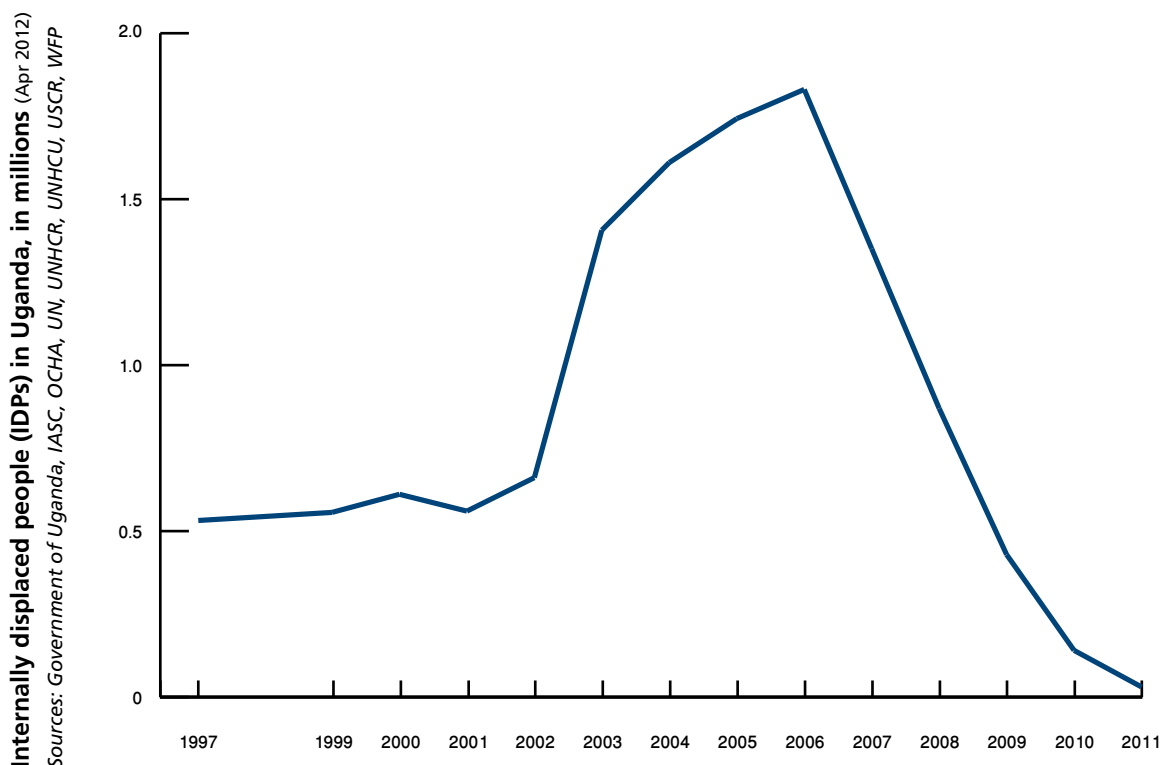
A history of antagonism and distrust between the Acholi (a people of northern Uganda and South Sudan) and politically-influential tribes of southern Uganda contributed to the formation of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in 1987. Led by Joseph Kony, the LRA sought to overthrow the government of President Yoweri Museveni, protect Acholi culture and rule Uganda in accordance with the Ten Commandments (LIU, 30 October 2003, p.33; RLP, 28 February 2004, p.5; CSOPNU, 10 December 2004, p.28).

Large-scale displacement in northern Uganda resulted both from LRA attacks on civilians and government strategy, started in 1996, to forcibly relocate civilians into IDP camps, officially described as "protected villages". By the end of 2005, a total of about 1.8 million people had been moved into IDP camps (UNHCR, 2012). An unknown number fled to urban areas in other parts

of Uganda. Clashes between a variety of rebel movements and the government, as well as inter-tribal violence and general banditry, also caused displacement in the 1990s and early 2000s in other regions of Uganda. No significant conflict-induced displacement has been reported since 2006 (Government of Uganda, 26 December 2011; Uganda Clusters, 2010).

Security improved and many IDPs returned home following the 2006 signing by the government and the LRA of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA). While the CHA ended LRA attacks inside Uganda it did not lead, as anticipated, to a conclusive peace agreement. The LRA shifted operations to South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and to the Central African Republic (CAR). The LRA reportedly killed at least 1,500 people and abducted 2,300 in these countries between 2009 and 2011. It has also forcibly displaced at least 465,000 people, the majority in the DRC (OCHA, January 2012).

Graph: Conflict-induced displacement in Uganda



In May 2010 the U.S. government enacted The Lords Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Act. It aims to support stabilisation of areas affected by LRA violence, protect civilians, allow for humanitarian relief and reconstruction and foster reconciliation and transitional justice (US Congress, 5 January 2010). In December 2010, the U.S. launched a comprehensive strategy to address LRA activity across the region (Resolve, 3 December 2010).

In March 2012, Uganda, CAR, South Sudan and the DRC, with the backing of the United Nations and African Union, assigned 5,000 soldiers to hunt for the LRA and its elusive leader. They are supported by 100 United States Army Special Forces personnel. Previous offensives failed to end atrocities by the LRA or capture its leader. Joseph Kony and other commanders were indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2005. As of May 2012, they were either dead or at large as fugitives whose whereabouts were unknown.

Museveni was elected for a fourth presidential term in 2011.

#### *Displacement due to natural disasters*

With 90 per cent of its population depending on income earned from agriculture, Uganda is particularly vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters and climate change, leaving populations of the most vulnerable regions at risk of repeated reliance on humanitarian assistance. In 2011, heavy rains in many parts of Uganda resulted in flooding, water logging, landslides, death, displacement and destruction of property and crops. Over 80,000 people were affected, mostly in eastern Uganda. In many districts, local governments were unable to cope with the impact of torrential rains and required assistance from Kampala and humanitarian agencies (Government of Uganda, 26 December 2011).

## **Durable Solutions**

Return has been the settlement option preferred by most IDPs in northern Uganda (FMR, October 2011). Thanks to improved security, most of the 1.8 million IDPs who lived in camps at the peak of the conflict have returned. Most have gone back to areas of origin while a minority has resettled elsewhere.

Recovery and development efforts in areas of return have not been sufficient. Returnees, together with other residents, have dealt with continuing difficulties in the face of inadequate basic services and limited support to rebuild their livelihoods (Government of Uganda, 26 December 2011).

Decades of war have substantially eroded the traditional Acholi commitment and capacity to care for vulnerable and elderly family members. With many additional burdens, especially tilling new land to re-establish livelihoods, many returnee families cannot offer shelter. Today the majority of the 30,000 IDPs remaining in camps - most of which have been officially closed - either cannot manage the return process on their own (due to their age, illness or disability) or have no land to go back to (UNHCR, December 2011; Government of Uganda, 26 December 2011). Many widows and orphans are denied access to land of deceased husbands and fathers.

The process of closing camps has been led by the government and facilitated by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Following the 2008 government promulgation of Camp Phase Out Guidelines (OPM, May 2008) some owners of land on which IDP camps had been established started pressuring IDPs to leave. Those holding land title to IDP camps have received no compensation for the protracted use of their land, although there are provisions in Ugandan law to do so (WRI, December 2010).

In 2010, UNHCR and District Disaster Management Committees in the north carried out a Northern Uganda Durable Solutions Assessment with the support of the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) to inform the planning of recovery activities. As of May 2012, the assessment had not been shared publicly.

#### *Access to basic services*

Access to basic services has remained elusive for the majority of people in return areas, as well as those who stayed. There is no evidence whether returning IDPs have additional challenges in accessing basic services greater than those faced by other poor Ugandans. Inadequate health care infrastructure has left populations susceptible to epidemics, such as Hepatitis E and polio. Many middle-aged people are affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly women (The Daily Monitor, 22 February 2012). Water and sanitation coverage has remained poor: in several areas of return in northern Uganda only some 30 per cent of the population has access (OCHA, 10 December 2010). Several districts in northern Uganda are also affected by nodding disease syndrome, an untreatable mentally and physically disabling disease that typically affects children between the ages of five and 15. It is thought to have killed over 200 children and affected several thousand children in recent years (Daily Monitor, 2 May 2012). Some IDPs have reportedly gone back to camps to access basic services.

#### *Land issues*

The return process has been marred by land conflicts, sometimes leading to violence and secondary displacement. An academic survey estimated that 65 percent of land disputes occurred on land abandoned by IDPs (Mabikke, S., April 2011).

Finding solutions to land disputes must involve returning IDPs. Their livelihoods depend on their ability to farm their land and sell their harvest, yet, increasingly, domestic and foreign investors are seeking to purchase arable land, a tendency spreading throughout Africa (IFPRI, November

2011). Thousands of people have been expelled as a result of transfer of land to investors, reportedly in violation of legally-defined consultation and compensation mechanisms (Oxfam, September 2011). Many people are also reported to have lost plots of land and crops during preliminary tests to search for oil (Associated Press, February 2012).

Effective dispute resolutions have been hampered. Clan elders who generally decide on land disputes have been overloaded with cases. Increased land shortages strongly limit their traditional capacity to issue new plots of land to those in need. Displacement has weakened elders' authority: traditions and customs are less known and adhered to. In addition, the state court system intended to mediate disputes is underfunded and overwhelmed by a backlog of cases (UN HABITAT, December 2007). Many IDPs cannot afford the fees charged for official assistance in settling land disputes (Brookings/IDMC, June 2011). Some of those returnees who have managed to regain their land have been secondarily displaced by incorporation of their land within national parks. This was the fate of returnees living in a village of Amuru District who were left with no choice other than to return to their former IDP camp (IRIN, February 2012).

## **National and international response**

#### *National Policies*

In May 2011, Uganda adopted a National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management with the aim of streamlining disaster management (Government of Uganda, 26 December 2011). The Office of the Prime Minister and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have assisted Acholi and Karamoja districts to develop district-based contingency plans.

Uganda has an elaborate policy framework for responding to internal displacement. One of the

first countries to develop a formal policy on IDPs, its 2004 policy guarantees the right of IDPs to freely choose between return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country. Subsequent government policies and practices have focused on return. In January 2010, Uganda became the first state 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.

#### *Promoting the national ownership of humanitarian coordination*

The last UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for Uganda was in 2010. In place of the CAP an inter-agency working group developed a humanitarian profile paper to guide decisions on humanitarian action (for the latest version, see: Government of Uganda, 26 December 2011, Uganda Humanitarian Profile - 2012).

The cluster system for coordinating humanitarian action was established in 2006, after the peak of the conflict, and was phased out so that by the end of 2011 all humanitarian coordination functions had been handed over to the government. Responsibility for the protection of IDPs was then transferred to the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC/IASC Protection Cluster, 29 October 2009). 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 (HC/RC) In the Acholi region, the UNAC is led by of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). UNHCR closed its office in the north at the end of 2011.

#### *Recovery and Development Plans*

The government assumes primary responsibility for recovery efforts in northern Uganda. At na-

tional level these are led by the Office of the Prime Minister, locally by district administrations.

In October 2007, the government launched the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda. Intended as a three-year framework to enable development and restore law and order in conflict-affected areas, it has four strategic objectives: consolidation of state authority; rebuilding and empowering communities; revitalising the economy; peace-building and reconciliation. Lack of funding and oversight mechanisms delayed the PRDP's commencement until mid-2009. The PRDP is expected to run until at least mid-2012 with a total budget of around \$600 million (OCHA, November 2010). A mid-term review judged aspirations to raise regional social and economic indicators to national levels within three years to be unrealistic (Government of Uganda, June 2011).

The UN launched a 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). 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 national poverty reduction strategy enacted in 2010 aims to lift the population out of poverty in 30 years and could potentially assist returnees (IMF, May 2010).

Large recovery and development programmes in northern Uganda have been delayed for long periods. There is ongoing confusion about funding between the government and development partners and lack of coordination between the government, donors and the UN. Development actors' impact in terms of fostering durable solutions for IDPs has been limited, given their considerable investment. The government and

its development partners have so far focused on such 'visible' recovery and development activities in northern Uganda as rebuilding of infrastructure and consolidating state authority.

There is increasing recognition of the need to foster peace-building activities between communities, between northern Ugandans and between the region and the rest of Uganda. Communities in northern Uganda have expressed great need for reparations and reconciliation. Linking consolidation of state authority and peace-building with service provision would help address strongly-held regional perceptions of being marginalised – a factor which in part explains the rise of the LRA (USAID, October 2010, p.5).

Two additional government programmes promoting recovery in northern Uganda are the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF). The latter is managed by the World Bank and entered its second three-year phase in 2011 with an annual budget of \$100 million. Other programmes include USAID's Northern Uganda Development of Enhanced Local Governance Infrastructure and Livelihoods (NUDEIL), a \$30 million three-year programme operating in three districts and the European Union's \$20 million Agricultural Livelihood Recovery Project (ALREP), a two-year programme in ten districts. 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 in addition to supporting NGOs (IDMC interview with 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 (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations, to set up a global database on internal displacement. A decade later, IDMC remains the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide.

IDMC aims to support better international and national responses to situations of internal displacement and respect for the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs), who are often among the world's most vulnerable people. It also aims to promote durable solutions for IDPs, through return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

IDMC's main activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on internal displacement caused by conflict, generalised violence and violations of human rights;
- Researching, analysing and advocating for the rights of IDPs;
- Training and strengthening capacities on the protection of IDPs;
- Contributing to the development of standards and guidance on protecting and assisting IDPs.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

### Contact:

#### **Marzia Montemurro**

Head of Africa and Americas department

Tel: +41 22 799 07 05

Mobile: +41 79 904 90 99

Email: [marzia.montemurro@nrc.ch](mailto:marzia.montemurro@nrc.ch)

#### **Greta Zeender**

Senior Country Analyst

Email: [greta.zeender@nrc.ch](mailto:greta.zeender@nrc.ch)

#### **IDMC**

Norwegian Refugee Council

Chemin de Balexert 7-9

1219 Geneva, Switzerland

[www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

Tel: +41 (0)22 799 0700

Fax: +41 (0)22 799 0701