



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

Country: Uganda

Planning Year: 2006

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UGANDA 2006

Part 1: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

In December of 2004, the Government of Uganda was hosting **230,262 registered refugees** living in sixty-five settlements, and approximately 40,000 unregistered refugees (whom we plan to register in 2005), mainly from Sudan, DRC and Rwanda. Refugees have the right to work, of movement and of access to universal primary education and enjoy the respect for their other social and economic rights at the same level as nationals.

The Government continues to generously promote the self sufficiency of refugees, and provides them both residential and agricultural plots. Thus, the refugee settlement areas are extensive and are located in an area of over 60,000sq kilometers, stretching from the border of Rwanda to the south, the DRC to the west and the Sudan to the north. East of the refugee hosting areas are the northern districts of Uganda that have been affected by the 19 year old conflict with the Lord's resistance Army, which has resulted in the displacement of nearly 2 million people. In fact, according to Reuters AlertNet, three of the ten most neglected humanitarian crisis are happening either in Uganda or at its doorstep, i.e. the internal displacement in northern Uganda, DRC's complex crisis and the aftermath of south Sudan's civil war. As a result of this geopolitical environment, the refugee programme in Uganda is constantly in flux, with new arrivals and new repatriants moving in and out of Uganda on an almost daily basis. Consequently, the Office in Uganda is continuously called upon to respond to new situations and to expand or re-configure its programmes regularly.

With respect to the Sudan, the forecast for 2006 is that, if the Peace Agreement signed between the Government of Khartoum and the SPLA on 9 January 2005 is translated into adequate levels of support, and if interregional and tribal conflicts in South Sudan are solved, there could be significant levels of return. Infrastructure in the country is poor, and refugees are well cared for in Uganda. Equally crucial will be the resolution of the 19 year-old conflict opposing the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda since LRA actions inside Sudan have led to displacement and dissuade refugees from considering return. Should these conditions not be met, not only will repatriation to Southern Sudan not take place, rather there could be new outflows. It is worth mentioning that some 1,600 Sudanese arrived in Uganda between January and February 2005, in addition to over 10,000 who arrived in 2004.

As instability continues in DRC, particularly in the eastern regions bordering Uganda, new refugee arrivals are expected in 2005. The magnitude of the movement will depend on protection and assistance delivered inside the DRC and on whether asylum-seekers are allowed by the different Congolese militia groups to leave the county. In 2004 over 2,500 new refugees were relocated to Kyaka refugee settlement and over 6,000 between January and March 2005.

Rwandan refugees will be encouraged to repatriate prior to the expected introduction of the Cessation clause. However, in 2004 out of 2,449 who registered to return home, 500 made their way back to Uganda citing lack of land, fear of the Gacaca process, arbitrary arrest, and lack of infrastructure as the reasons for their return.

There is also a very large urban population in Kampala and other city centers, predicted at anywhere between 10,000- 50,000 of all nationalities. In 2005 the Branch Office is reviewing its protection and assistance programmes for urban based refugees. In particular, the Office will conduct a profiling exercise to better ascertain who they are, what are their needs and prospects for a more durable solution.

Resettlement will be used both as a protection tool and a durable solution. The main countries of resettlement are the USA, Canada and Australia. In 2004, 1,421 persons were resettled, and 1,500 are expected to be resettled in 2005. The planned figure for 2006 is 2,500 individuals, mostly from Rwanda, Sudan and DRC. Additional group resettlement is also foreseen.

Thus, the 2006 Uganda refugee programme will consist of repatriation for those who express the wish to return home, humanitarian assistance for the newly arrived refugees, resettlement for a number of protection cases, and support towards self-reliance for the rest. The office is also expected to participate in the return and resettlement of IDPs, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Co-ordinator.

Because of the uncertainties surrounding the situations in the neighboring countries, it is extremely difficult to provide an accurate figure of the expected refugee population in 2006. Some 6,000 Sudanese refugees are estimated to repatriate in 2005, but outflows into Uganda could exceed that number.

The 2005 programme includes a provision to assist up to 15,000 new refugees from DRC. However, increasing insecurity could actually result in a massive influx.

As far as the Rwandese refugees are concerned, limited repatriation movements have started in the first months of 2005, (600 individuals up to March), but there are no assurances that they will continue to return or that there will not be new or re-arrivals from Rwanda.

Thus our overall planning figure as at January 2006 is 280,000 refugees.

The new domestic Refugee Bill is anticipated to be passed in 2005. UNHCR plans to continue supporting related GoU activities, namely, sensitization of all stakeholders, including refugees, on the provisions of the Bill; drafting of the Refugee Bill regulations; training of immigration, police, as well as security officials; and, strengthening the refugee management structures, such as the Refugee Eligibility Committee, so that they are in conformity with the provisions of the new legislation.

A key assumption underlying the 2006 refugee programme is that the Government of Uganda will maintain its generous asylum regime and will continue to provide free access to land thereby enabling refugees to achieve varying degrees of self-sufficiency. To further this end, in 2004 the Government of Uganda and UNHCR jointly launched a Development Assistance to Refugee Hosting Areas programme. This was rolled out in three districts of Uganda in 2005 and it is anticipated to be expanded to three additional districts in 2006. Accordingly, refugees, when empowered with resources and the capacity to be actively involved in the prioritization and implementation of their own development agenda, can play a key role in their own socio-economic development and contribute to the development of their host communities. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 147th out of 175 countries according to the Human Development Index, which makes the Government's support all the more commendable. To name but a few of the national challenges:

- 38.8 % of the population lives below the national poverty line, a 4% increase since 1999, despite an economic growth of 6% per annum in the same period.
- A 3.4% population growth a year. The total population in 2002 was 24.7 million, 52% of whom are under fifteen years.
- Over 1.1 millions persons living with HIV or AIDS and two million orphans.
- Severe gender disparities resulting in the disempowerment of women in all sectors and levels of society.
- The internal displacement of 2 million persons, including refugees, as a result of a twenty year civil conflict in Northern Uganda

2. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

The UNHCR offices in Uganda will fully integrate protection, programme and community services units in 2005 so that all planning and implementation is conducted in a holistic manner, ensuring the mainstreaming of gender issues, refugees with special needs including the elderly, HIV/AIDS affected people and other policy priorities. Most of the refugees producing situations in the region are expected to continue in 2006, despite the signing of various peace agreements and positive movements in political arenas. It is therefore impossible to establish a time frame for durable solutions to be achieved. Based on UNHCR's Global strategic objectives and the Africa Bureau's regional strategy, the 2006 Uganda country programme objectives are:

- Ensure the delivery of protection for all refugees.
- Attempt to attain and/or maintain minimum standards of humanitarian assistance in the sectors of nutrition, shelter, health care, water, sanitation, and community services, as well as provide support to the refugee hosting communities as and when required
- Actively promote the voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriation of refugees provided conducive conditions exist.
- Intensify efforts to assist refugees to attain increased self-reliance and continue working towards the integration of refugee services into the national service structure in collaboration with the Ugandan Government, UNHCR implementing partners and development agencies under the rubric of the DAR programme.
- Expand the development of the DAR initiative to include other partners and donors and ensure its full ownership by the Uganda Government
- Vigorously pursue all other feasible opportunities for durable solutions for refugees, including enhancing their potential local integration through naturalization, and for some residual caseloads facilitate resettlement as an option.
- Enhance the protection of urban refugees, especially women, girls and children
- Operationalise the new domestic Refugee Bill and institutionalize Government protection and management structures.