



*Development Assistance for Refugees
(DAR) for
Uganda Self Reliance Strategy*

Way Forward

**Report on Mission to Uganda
14 to 20 September 2003**

RLSS/ DOS Mission Report 03/11

Development Assistance for Refugees for Uganda Self Reliance Strategy

Way Forward¹ September 2003

The basic criterion for a good programme is self-reliance. In protracted refugee situations however, refugees - sometimes for decades - remain dependent on humanitarian assistance.

The generous policy of the Government of Uganda for decades to host refugees and provide them with agricultural land and opportunities to become productive members of the society is a rare example. The Government of Uganda and the refugee hosting population need support in the spirit of burden sharing to consolidate, sustain and build upon the achievements of Self Reliance Strategy (SRS), and in the process continue providing opportunities to refugees for self reliance pending durable solutions.

The findings of this mission to Uganda from 14 to 20 September 2003, and recommendations were discussed with the 1st Deputy Prime Minister / Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees during the debriefing meeting held in Kampala on 19 September 2003. Follow-up extensive consultations were held in Geneva in the margins of EXCOM on 30 September 2003. The 1st Deputy Prime Minister / Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees at the latter meeting was accompanied by the Permanent Secretary Home Affairs, the Commissioner for Refugees, and the Principal Settlement Commandant of the Office of the Prime Minister.

This document reflects the agreed upon position of the Government of Uganda and UNHCR on Way Forward on the Uganda Self Reliance Strategy.

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¹ This Way Forward was developed on the basis of "Stocktaking of SRS in Uganda" by UNHCR Uganda in August 2003, and through the consultative process with stakeholders and the Office of the Prime Minister during the mission of S. Malik fielded by the Reintegration and Local Settlement Section/ Division of Operational Support, UNHCR HQs from 14-20 September 2003.

Background

1. UNHCR's long presence in Uganda dates back from the 1960s. The majority of the refugees in the country today, of the total refugee population of 200,800 (*as of 28 February 2003*) are Southern Sudanese (172,300) hosted in northern Uganda. About 8,500 refugees hosted in the Southwest are from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). There are other smaller groups from Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya that are also being assisted. Sudanese and Congolese refugees are granted status on a *prima facie* basis, while the status of others is ascertained through individual refugee status determination.
2. The Sudanese refugee programme in Uganda is a protracted one, dating back to 1989 (Adjumani and Moyo districts) and 1993 (Arua district) when the majority of the refugees arrived from Southern Sudan.
3. The Government of Uganda, through the Ministry for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, implements a liberal refugee policy. Refugees had been provided with agricultural lands with the objective of making them self-sufficient pending solutions to their plight. Despite the fact that the new refugee bill has not yet been passed by the Parliament, in practice refugees have enjoyed freedom of movement, access to markets, health, education and natural resources. As a result, refugees in the northern Uganda have managed to progressively become productive members of their communities contributing to some extent to the overall development and poverty alleviation of host districts. This has also resulted in peaceful coexistence between communities.
4. The effort of the Ugandan Government should be applauded considering the meagre resources at its disposal. The generous policy of hosting refugees for decades and allocating agricultural land in making refugees self reliant has eased many of the hardships of vulnerable populations.

Refugee Hosting Areas - Opportunities and Constraints

5. Northern Uganda, where the large majority of the Sudanese refugees are settled, remains economically marginalised, remote and under-developed. Host populations and refugees equally suffer also from the hardships created by the insecurity in certain parts of the Northern Uganda. The UN inter-agency study conducted following a UN Representatives' mission to Northern Uganda organized by UNHCR and the Government of Uganda during 2002, examined UN's comparative strengths (and those of other partners) and concluded that a strategic engagement of central and local governments and of civil society would enhance the shared vision of a peaceful and productive society in Northern Uganda. In the study, several options for inter-agency collaboration were discussed and evaluated including: strategies for the enhancement of existing collaboration; a selective and more focused approach; 'broad-spectrum' intervention; and, joint/integrated programming. The outcome of this study indicated that the selective/focused/integrated option would be the most feasible both operationally and financially. The option is also consistent with the strategic entry points highlighted in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) formulated on the basis of the Common Country Assessment- the CCA.
6. Similar opportunities may exist in other refugee hosting areas in the south and south west of the country where refugees are provided with opportunities though SRS by the Government.

Peace Process and Voluntary Repatriation

7. Despite the continued unpredictable situation in Southern Sudan, some hope for possible repatriation of the Sudanese refugees is being perceived. If the Machakos peace process concludes successfully, the voluntary repatriation of the Sudanese refugees could commence in 2004. According to the UNHCR Country Operations Plan of 2004, some 15,000 refugees are expected to repatriate the first year. The repatriation process would depend largely on the absorption capacity and increased reintegration and reconstruction activities in the Southern Sudan.
8. In the mean time SRS programme in northern Uganda would be in preparation of durable solutions for the largest caseload i.e. SRS pending durable solutions with additional Development Assistance for Refugees empowering refugee and host communities. Empowerment, particularly of women and enhancement of productive capacities and self reliance of refugees would lead equipped and capacitated refugees to any of the three durable solutions i.e. repatriation to their country of origin, local integration in the country of asylum or resettlement to a third country. The rehabilitation programme could also become a component of DAR programme as and when voluntary repatriation is realized.

Uganda Self Reliance Strategy

9. The Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), a joint strategy drawn by the Government of Uganda and UNHCR with the overall goal “to improve the standard of living of the people of refugee hosting districts, including the refugees” had the following objectives:
 - Empowerment of refugees and nationals in the area to the extent that they would be able to support themselves; and,
 - To establish mechanisms that will ensure integration of services for the refugees with those of the nationals.
10. The implementation of SRS, which was launched in 1999, gained momentum only after a directive from the Minister for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees to all administrative and political leaders in the refugee hosting districts in early 2002. Initial apprehensions of refugee hosting population – *it is a Kampala driven process; UNHCR is trying to hand over its responsibilities to the districts; it is a way to foster naturalisation process* – in implementing SRS were addressed through workshops, seminars, trainings, persistent dialogue and through jointly implemented projects. These apprehensions have changed over time and refugees are now seen as potential for development. SRS, over time has also helped in “attitude change” amongst refugees and host communities alike – from free handouts to self-help and capacity building. The overwhelming majority of the stakeholders in the informal workshop in Adjumani during the Reintegration and Local Settlement Section (RLSS)/Division of Operational Support (DOS) Headquarters mission (14-20 September 2003) voiced that SRS is a good practice and should be reinforced and expanded to cover more areas of the refugee hosting communities, and should become a launching pad for area development programme. According to the participants at the same workshop, SRS has also largely contributed to the peaceful co-existence between communities and to the human security in the refugee hosting districts.
11. The collaboration of UNHCR with the Government and partner agencies on SRS, as determined through the stocktaking exercise and the RLSS/DOS HQ mission, has started paying dividends in improving, to some degree, the quality of life in and around refugee settlements. The Government of Uganda and host communities who so generously provided land and opportunities to the refugees under the “right-of-use-for-the-time-they-

are-in-exile” has been instrumental in ensuring that refugees progress towards self-reliance. Food self-sufficiency, *albeit* affected by intermittent dry spells, has been achieved for the majority of the refugees. This however, needs to be assessed, evaluated systematically and documented also for the way forward.

SRS and Social Sectors

12. In line with Government of Uganda’s policy of decentralisation, the process of integration of services for refugees, such as education, health, environment, water and community services, with those provided for Ugandan nationals in selected districts has encountered mixed results. In some districts some encouraging results have been achieved through *transfer* of activities from NGOs to line departments yet in other areas a lot still remains to be done. Mere transfer of responsibilities from NGO implementing partners to line departments, without proper assessment of absorption capacity and capacity building would not constitute “integration” of services. In the long run transferring sectoral activities without an overall sectoral strategy may even impede the progress of SRS.
13. There are however, some good examples of integration which need to be built upon and lessons drawn from. One favourable development towards integration of services which took place in 2001 was the formulation of the National Health Sector Strategic Plan. This strategic plan was incorporated into the District Development Plan which will render services to both nationals and refugees. Similarly, in the education sector a joint proposal by the Ministry of Finance and UNHCR was presented to the Education Sector Consultative Body to solicit the inclusion of refugees in national sectoral plans. Refugee children are already benefiting from the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme of the Government of Uganda. The above is an indication of achievements *albeit* limited in refugee hosting districts in beginning the integration process.

SRS and Food Security

14. Over the years commendable achievements have been made by the refugees in accomplishing one of the main SRS objectives - food self sufficiency. According to the stocktaking by UNHCR Uganda, 60% of the refugee population in northern Uganda is now self sufficient in terms of food production and have been phased out of the general relief food distribution of WFP. The remaining 40% are either partially self sufficient or dependent on food supply because of various reasons including: not enough land, infertile area, insecurity, and new arrivals. This food production resulted in distribution of 5,000 Mt of food instead of 16,961 MT of food (if 100% population was on food subsistence) in Moyo/Adjumani Districts in 2001. With the SRS this approach was further reinforced and as a result similar achievements were made in 2002. Similar achievements were also recorded in Arua District in 2001/2002. In total, some 39,200 Mt² less food was distributed (or saved) to refugees if full ration was to be distributed to this population.

SRS and Burden Sharing

15. The stakeholders’ workshop during the RLSS/DOS HQ mission highlighted that the self sufficiency in food of large number of refugees and community services has not only resulted in increased self-esteem and self-respect of refugees (taking charge of their own lives and livelihoods) but also that of the host population. The latter largely because the

² 39,200 Mt of food amounts to some 37.2 m USD

host districts consider themselves as “major donor in hosting refugees”, referring to the savings for the international community in food supply and other contributions such as natural resources. The workshop participants also concluded that “SRS is also a relief to the international community”.

16. The host communities while appreciative of SRS related limited infrastructural development activities and support to the local population, raised serious concerns on the shortcomings so far in the notion of “burden sharing”. The elected representatives of Adjumani and Moyo districts made attempts to quantify contributions the host communities are making in hosting refugees, in addition to the savings made in food production. The burden is not shared proportionately by the international community. They also highlighted that national development plans and those of other agencies do not take refugee statistics into account in appropriating resources for the districts while the infrastructure and services in refugee hosting areas is expected to cater for additional population.

SRS and Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)

17. The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) of the Government of Uganda is the country’s development framework³. It provides overall goals for policy and programmes through principles that would guide investment plans and management of the economy. PEAP attempts to address poverty through the following four goals:

- Rapid and sustainable economic growth and structural transformation;
- Good governance and security;
- Increased ability of the poor to raise their incomes; and,
- Enhanced quality of life.

18. There are strong linkages between Uganda’s long-term development vision and its PEAP. The findings of the CCA Report confirm the strategic direction of the PEAP, and its preparation drew attention to the challenges that must be addressed in pursuit of the goals set out in the PEAP. The remaining challenges have been addressed within the UNDAF.
19. The Government is in the process of including disaster management and refugee related functions and issues in the PEAP. In this regard the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees is working towards incorporating the Uganda SRS in the PEAP. The inclusion of refugees in the Universal Primary Education (UPE) is one good example of integrating refugees and SRS in the national development programmes.

³ United Nations Inter-agency collaboration in Northern Uganda - The Way Forward, Kamala – March 2003

Way Forward

20. The RLSS/DOS HQ mission and UNHCR Kampala briefed on 19 September 2003, the 1st Deputy Prime Minister/ Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees of the above mentioned findings of the stock-taking exercise and outcome of the mission. The following recommendations on way forward were further discussed and agreed upon with the 1st Deputy Prime Minister/ Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees and his delegation during the side meeting at EXCOM on 30 September 2003:

- i. The Government of Uganda, particularly the district administrations including elected bodies of refugee hosting districts⁴ wish to build on the positive aspects of the SRS by integrating it into national and district development plans. SRS should not therefore, be implemented as a stand-alone project anymore, and solely funded by UNHCR, but form part of the existing development processes and programmes, PEAP with broader resource base. The target of the Government to include SRS in PEAP should be accomplished which would facilitate additional development assistance for refugees for SRS.
- ii. Through participation of refugees and the host communities in an integrated manner, the Government of Uganda would like to build on the gains made through SRS. This will help address some of the problems of poverty and under-development in refugee hosting districts which could promote further peace, security and stability in the region. In this regard the Government would like UNHCR to promote for additional Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR) for Uganda SRS. This will be in line with the High Commissioner's Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern. The overarching inspiration to promote additional development assistance for refugees will be for: improved burden-sharing for hosting large numbers of refugees; promoting better quality of life and self-reliance for refugees pending different durable solutions; and, a better quality of life for host communities. DAR for Uganda SRS would therefore be for:
 - Burden sharing with the host country
 - Development of the host community
 - Gender equality, dignity and improved quality of life of both refugees and host communities
 - Empowerment and enhancement of productive capacities and self reliance of refugees, particularly of women, pending durable solutions.
- iii. The Government of Uganda and UNHCR would like to urgently undertake a comprehensive evaluation of Uganda SRS. The evaluation should be carried out by a team of two expert consultants hired by UNHCR with participation of WFP and UNICEF, 1-2 donors, 1-2 NGOs and the Government of Uganda. The results of the evaluation should help draw up plans for promoting Development Assistance for Refugees for SRS in the refugee hosting areas of Northern, Southern and South West Uganda; adaptation of existing Self Reliance Strategy in Uganda; reorientation of UNHCR funded 2004 programme; and, collection of data which would help facilitate integration of SRS in development processes especially in PEAP. The evaluation would have the following distinct components:

⁴ Refugee hosting districts in Northern, South and South West Uganda

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- a. SRS and house hold economy, food security, gender aspect, social sector activities and related impact in improving the quality of life of refugees and host population – the socio-economic impact.
 - b. Health, education, water and environment sector activities (transferred/streamlined and those implemented by NGOs); absorption capacity of line departments; proposed future directions.
 - c. Communication infrastructure (access roads etc.) and its impact on improving security for refugee and host populations.
 - d. Overall impact and effectiveness of SRS.
- iv. The refugee bill has not been passed yet by the Parliament. In practice however, refugees have enjoyed freedom of movement, access to markets, health, education and natural resources. Despite this generous practice, stakeholders of SRS including line departments face difficulties in the absence of a legal framework. At district level there are problems associated with the employment of refugee teachers and technicians in line departments; and, in the inclusion of refugee related issues in development planning processes. It was realized therefore, that pending refugee bill there is need for a “legal fabric” for SRS.
 - v. The Government of Uganda and UNHCR agree that the gains in SRS thus far, especially in community services and food security depend largely on access of populations to quality health, water and education services. Equally important is sustainable natural resource management. Transferring sector activities without proper assessment of capacity of line departments and evaluation of quality of services already transferred may have negative impact both on the departments and well being of populations. It was therefore agreed that pending comprehensive evaluation of SRS (as mentioned in 3. above) care must be practised in transferring responsibilities from NGO implementing partners to line departments. Also a distinction must be made between “transfer” and “integration” of services for the sustainability of social sector activities and capacity building of Government departments. The results of evaluation would help reorient 2004 programmes, if necessary, during the first quarter of 2004.
 - vi. UN system agencies, World Bank, civil society organizations, NGOs, bilateral programmes and Government are actively involved in a wide range of activities in the refugee hosting districts. The need for coordination amongst various programmes/projects at the district level was repeatedly expressed by various stakeholders. In the districts where SRS is implemented, UNHCR and partners could help establish a Management Information System in the offices of the District Planning Officer for coordination and effective use of resources for competing priorities. There is also need to establish a forum at district level where information sharing - for integrated programming between various programmes, including SRS could take place. Faster and more sustainable development will be attained when the Government, UN System agencies, World Bank, bilateral donors and NGOs coordinate their activities.
 - vii. Indicators and benchmarks for SRS should be further developed in line with the Millennium Development Goals to measure progress and which will also help in developing SRS with longer-term perspective of PEAP in line with the development plans of refugee hosting districts in Uganda.

Next Steps

21. Following were the agreed upon next steps:

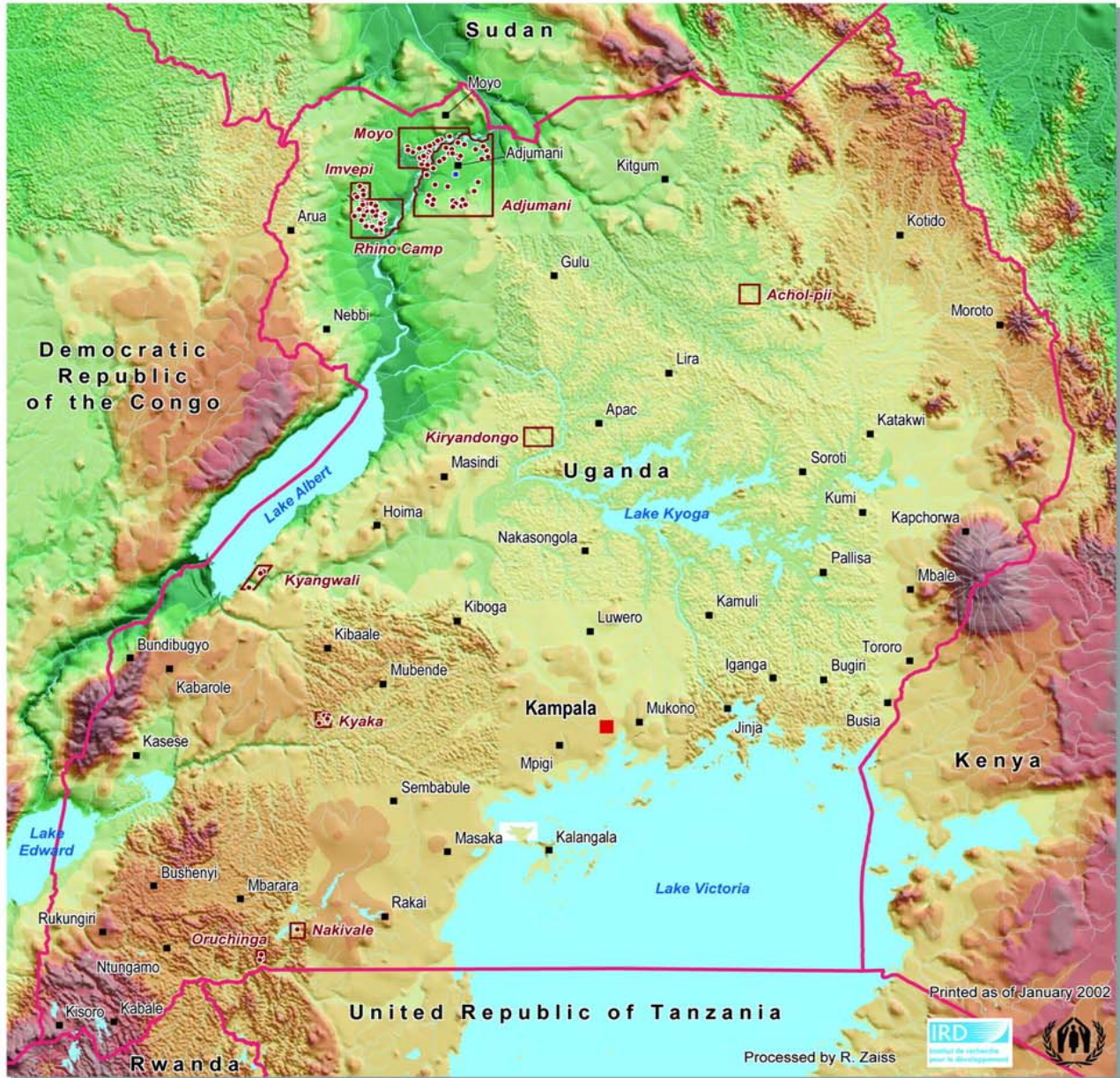
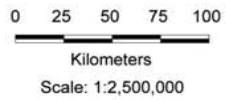
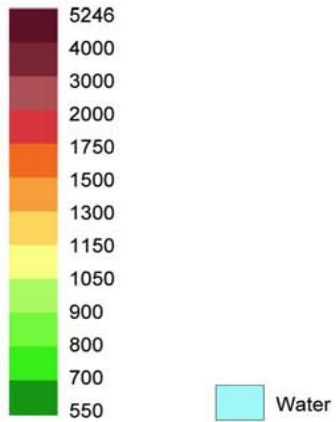
- i. The 1st Deputy Prime Minister/ Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees to officially launch Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR) for Uganda SRS. As a first step the Office of the Prime Minister could officially forward this mutually agreed upon “Way Forward” to the donor Embassies in Kampala.
- ii. UNHCR Headquarters and UNHCR Uganda together with the Government to draw up Terms of Reference for the evaluation of SRS; identify expert consultants; establish a team as explained in recommendation number 3; and help field the evaluation mission. The SRS Task Force in Uganda could coordinate and steer the evaluation process. In order to maintain the momentum gathered over the last few months on Uganda SRS, the entire process of evaluation should preferably be completed by December 2003.
- iii. Government of Uganda and UNHCR together with partners should take necessary steps towards achieving targets as outlined above on way forward.
- iv. UNHCR together with the Government of Uganda should develop a strategy to promote additional Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR) for Uganda SRS for the refugee hosting districts in Uganda.
- v. UNHCR and the Government of Uganda should disseminate information on Uganda SRS at various fora including organising briefing sessions in Geneva with the participation of Uganda Mission in Geneva at opportune moments to raise awareness amongst donors and other partners.

UGANDA

Localisation of refugee settlements

- Refugee area
- Refugee Settlement
- Refugee Transit Center
- National Capital
- District Headquarter
- International boundary

Altitude (meters)



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Processed by R. Zaiss

Source: Digital Chart of the World, First Edition 1993. GTOPO30. IRD/UNHCR: FRAME data base.