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Uganda is receiving refugee influxes from 3 conflict zones

With the recent crises unfolding in Burundi, DRC and South Sudan, thousands of asylum seekers are crossing into Uganda through the national borders in the north, south and west. Offering protection to the successive waves of refugee influxes, Uganda has been in the past month gearing up for an anticipated increase in the Burundian arrivals following the widespread violence.

Uganda, due to its central location in one of the world's most volatile regions, has received refugees repeatedly within the last year. The outbreak of violence in South Sudan in December 2013 has brought 155,000 refugees into the country. Close to 100,000 of the new arrivals are hosted in the Adjumani region north of Uganda, where LWF Uganda is operational. With renewed clashes intensifying in South Sudan, further influx is projected in the coming month.

In May, UNHCR reported that thousands of people began pouring into Uganda from the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, fleeing the recent uprising of the rebel militia resulting in lawlessness. The Congolese refugee influx prompted Act Uganda Forum to issue an alert to draw more attention to this silent emergency in the making:

http://www.actalliance.org/resources/alerts_and_situation_reports/Alert16_2015_Congolese_Ref_Uganda.pdf/view

The most recent developments in Burundi have raised concerns, as the humanitarian emergency unravels itself. The political chaos in Burundi forced more than 100,000 refugees to flee from their homes in matter of months. Most refugees initially made way to Rwanda, before continuing to Tanzania. The poor conditions in Tanzania however led to an outbreak of cholera, and the asylum seekers have increasingly sought safety in DRC and Uganda.

Uganda's generous asylum policies

Stemming from its cultural values of sharing and hospitality, Uganda has a rather unique approach to receiving refugees. The hospitality extends to sharing meager resources with those fleeing from across the borders. After registration and a brief stay at the reception center, refugee households arriving to Uganda are allocated a plot of land for housing and farming. Whereas the more conventional refugee camps around the world can be overcrowded and stressful environments, the Ugandan government has opted for more dignified settings that address the refugee need for self-sufficiency. The way that refugees are welcomed to the settlements in Adjumani, Rwamwanja and Nakivale alike illustrates the awareness that as refugees are often forced to stay exiled for extended periods of time, alleviating the suffering goes hand in hand with providing the opportunity to build homes, cultivate land and set up businesses.

This approach to refugee settlement provides better conditions in terms of human dignity, reduced risk of disease epidemics, and empowerment, but it does pose some challenges as well. The growth in refugee populations, now arriving in increasing numbers from Burundi, South Sudan and DRC, means that land is becoming scarce. The continuing emergency in Adjumani, for example, has overwhelmed the local community, and available land has become harder to come by as refugees continue to cross the border into Uganda from South Sudan. The environmental degradation, often resulting from massive settlements, can become a source of tension as resources dwindle. To alleviate the tensions between the host community and refugees, LWF Uganda incorporates into its projects an environmental protection component. In Adjumani, the cornerstone of the LWF multi-sectoral response is the promotion of peaceful co-existence with host communities. Investment in environmental protection and strengthening of more comprehensive service integration is designed to ensure peaceful coexistence among the refugee and host populations.

Burundian refugee crisis

Since April 2015, Burundians have been fleeing to neighboring countries following the onset of political violence. There was a subsequent failed coup which led to the deterioration in safety and security in Burundi. Interviewed refugees in Rwanda have reported fear of persecution following threats from the notorious “Imbonerakure”, the youth wing of the ruling party in Burundi. This has led to significant displacement towards surrounding countries, such as Rwanda, Tanzania, DRC and Uganda. After 26,300 Burundians crossed into Rwanda over the past weeks, Rwanda has shut down its borders in line with their immigration policy.

Currently Uganda is receiving around 400 new arrivals daily. Seven thousand Burundi refugees have now fled to Uganda and many more are expected. Many indicate that they fled due to the violence and fears that the security situation could deteriorate further.

Burundian refugees in Uganda

The asylum seekers are arriving through the Kajitumba border with Rwanda, and other entry points. They are first accommodated at reception centres in Nakivale and Oruchinga where they are registered by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) before going through the refugee status determination procedure.

Nakivale refugee settlement is located in Insingiro district, south western Uganda. Already by March 2014, the 183 km² area had become a home to 60,992 refugees. Said to be the 8th largest in Africa, the camp is composed of 79 villages split into 3 main zones of Rubondo, Base camp and Juru.

An interagency rapid assessment for Nakivale was conducted on 28/05/2015. A local TV station aired footage of newly arrived Burundian refugees, congested in rooms in Nakivale refugee settlement indicating that access to basic services were still lacking. At the initial stages of the influx, the OPM representative in Nakivale made the following recommendations;

- Need to increase police presence in refugee screening
- Provision of a hot meal at reception center
- Refurbish and rehabilitate reception centres both at Kabahinda and Juru
- Nonfood items (beddings, blankets, clothing, kitchen sets, poles) urgently required.

LWF response to the Burundian crisis

- LWF participates in the OPM & UNHCR high level planning and coordination platform for strategic decisions
- LWF Team in Rwamwanja refugee settlement is tracking any Burundian influx and sharing with LWF Kampala head office for contingency planning
- LWF through the ACT mechanism has issued an ACT Alert to raise awareness on the plight of the refugees
http://www.actalliance.org/resources/alerts_and_situation_reports/Alert%2014_2015_Burundi%20Crisis%20IDP-Refugee%20Influx.pdf/view
- LWF dispatched a team of experts into Tanzania to support Tanganyika Christian Refugee Services (TCRS) responding to the Burundian refugee crisis in Tanzania.



Recent Burundian arrivals by the Lake Tanganyika waiting to be registered and transported to Nyarugusu camp in western Tanzania.

© LWF Burundi team, conducting an assessment on the ground.

Civil war in South Sudan continues

The situation in South Sudan remains volatile with increasing security issues despite multiple ceasefire agreements. The UN has reported sporadic fighting in Bentiu, Jonglei and Bor, causing an influx of refugees fleeing to Uganda. Additional factor bringing more people across the border is food insecurity; FAO reported that 2.5 million people (one-fifth of the population) are classified as being in emergency level food insecure, with an additional 3.9 million people suffering from food insecurity 'stress'.

With a total of 173,681 South Sudanese refugees residing in Uganda already, more refugees are expected to enter Uganda as a result of food insecurity and continued violence. Currently, the daily influx is increasing again with some 80 people crossing the border every day.

The operational planning figure for Uganda was revised to 210,000 by the end of 2015. The majority of the new arrivals are from the Upper Nile region of South Sudan, citing fear of continuing armed attacks by the rebels in Malakal and Bentiu as the main reason for fleeing. Approximately 88 % of the refugees are women and children, with 68 % being children under the age of 18.

South Sudanese hosted in Adjumani, Uganda

In the beginning of 2014, Adjumani was struggling to accommodate the sudden influx of South Sudanese arrivals, but now home to over 100,000 people in total, it has become a dynamic metropolis with increasing number of semi-permanent and permanent structures.

The refugees are hosted in the large settlement areas of Nyumanzi 1, Ayilo 1, Boroli, Baratuku, and Ayilo II, which are all disjointed settlements in the Western Nile region of Uganda. Most of the refugees are from Bor in Jonglei state, with some originating from Nimule. However many of the new arrivals prefer to be settled in Kiryandongo because they feel unsafe in Adjumani, which is dominated by people of Dinka ethnicity.

LWF Uganda responding in Adjumani

LWF was among the first partners to respond to this emergency, and has since remained a crucial implementing

partner of OPM & UNHCR in the sectors of WASH, Community Services, Shelter, Infrastructure, NFIs and Protection.

LWF-Uganda was originally operational in Adjumani district from 1986-2007, responding to the needs of Sudanese refugees. Following the refugee influx since December 2013, LWF re-established its presence in the district to respond to the urgent needs of South Sudanese refugees.

Please refer to the Act Appeal UGA151 launched 15th April 2015: http://www.actalliance.org/resources/appeals/UGA151_Uganda_ARISE.pdf/view

In the last reporting period, LWF repaired 4 boreholes in Nyumanzi and Ayilo I, in addition to the previously drilled 65 boreholes. Due to the extensive efforts in water supply, Adjumani has now average water coverage of 22 l/person/day, which is above UNHCR standards. Household latrine coverage is currently 66.1%, and LWF is providing environmental cleaning kits and promoting tippy taps along with hygiene sanitation awareness raising activities.

In addition to WASH sector, LWF is active in psychosocial support, protection and community services, ensuring access to legal services, and supporting vulnerable children, survivors of SGBV and people with disabilities. LWF supports 900 people with special needs with shelter construction, in addition to constructing more than 90 classrooms, 4 health centres, 6 community centers, 2 base camps and many more protection facilities.

A mobilization drive in Nyumanzi settlement, aimed at re-energizing the various households to continue improving their hygiene and sanitation situation. ©LWF WASH Adjumani



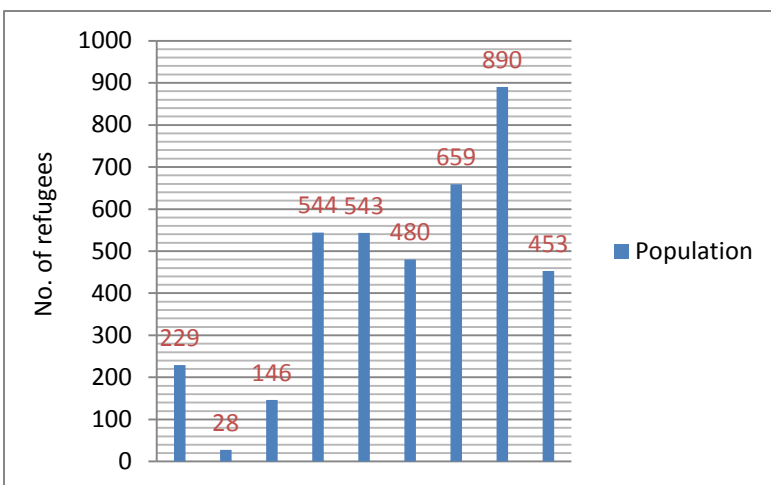
Influx of Congolese refugees in Uganda

The escalation of conflict in Eastern DRC has resulted in a renewed influx of Congolese refugees in Uganda. The main border entry points are Nteko and Kyeshero in Kanungu district. The refugees are received at the Nyakabande transit centre in Kisoro district, at the southern border between Uganda and DRC. From Kisoro they are transported to various refugee settlement sites including Rwamwanja, where LWF is operational in the newly opened Mahiga site. It's estimated that in the next three months, the settlement could receive up to about 8,000 refugees.

In May, 3,920 people were received at Mahane reception centre prior to being relocated to Mahiga site. As of 1st June, 1343 refugees are still hosted at Mahane reception centre awaiting distribution of NFIs and allocation of land.

The refugees are lacking access to basic needs such as food, water and sanitation, shelter, medical attention, and other necessary community services such as catering for Persons with Special Needs (elderly, children, women and children).

Graph indicating the trend of refugee influx at Mahane reception centre between March 23rd and May 30th 2015.



Refugees collecting water from the only borehole at Mahiga, constructed by LWF © LWF/ Pius Kikomeko

LWF Uganda response in Rwamwanja

With the feedback from Government Camp commandant at Mahane reception centre commending LWF for the good work done at Mahiga, the interventions continue as follows:

- Distribution of non-food items to refugees
- Identification of Persons with Special Needs
- Distribution of pit latrine excavation kits
- Excavation of a temporary public pit latrine
- Establishing a counseling desk and constructing temporary shelters at Mahane reception centre
- Establishment of Gender Based Violence task force, Child protection committee and a child friendly space

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