

Refugee Law Project Working Paper No. 19

# INVISIBLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN ADJUMANI DISTRICT



SEPTEMBER 2006

The Refugee Law Project (RLP) was established in November 1999 with the aim of protecting and promoting the rights of forced migrants in Uganda. The RLP operates as an autonomous project within the Faculty of Law of Makerere University, and focuses on three main areas: legal assistance and counselling, education and training, and research and advocacy. The Refugee Law Project works towards ensuring that asylum seekers, refugees and other forced migrants are, as specified under national and international law, treated with the fairness and consideration due fellow human beings.

## **REFUGEE LAW PROJECT**

Plot 9 Perryman Gardens, Old Kampala  
P.O. Box 33903  
Kampala, Uganda

Telephone: +256 41 343 556

Fax: +256 41 346 491

[research@refugeelawproject.org](mailto:research@refugeelawproject.org)

[www.refugeelawproject.org](http://www.refugeelawproject.org)

Additional copies of this and other Working Papers are available to the public online and can be downloaded at [www.refugeelawproject.org](http://www.refugeelawproject.org).

The Refugee Law Project Working Paper Series is a forum for sharing information on issues relating to forced migration in Uganda. All comments are welcome and the RLP reserves the right to revise any Working Paper.

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

**The following report presents a situation analysis of the condition of internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Adjumani district. Located in northern Uganda, Adjumani district has suffered from the effects of sporadic violence and armed conflict for several decades. As a result, forced displacement of both refugees and IDPs, though under-recognised, has been a common phenomenon in this region. In 2006, incursions into the district by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) caused further displacement.**

**Research findings show that unlike other war-affected districts in northern Uganda, humanitarian assistance to IDPs has been intermittent and commonly provided on a one-off basis. Specifically, the findings suggest that government policy tends to favour assisting displaced persons located in camps. As such, displaced persons in other northern districts enjoy more government support than those IDPs in Adjumani who are living among host communities. Alarming, data also shows that this policy is jeopardising IDP security and livelihoods in Adjumani, while also creating further tensions in the district. Insofar as the Juba peace talks between the LRA and the Government of Uganda (GoU) are ultimately successful, it is imperative that all affected districts, including Adjumani, are involved in reconstruction and reconciliation.**

**This report is based on field research conducted in Adjumani between 22 January and 6 February 2006 and on subsequent discussions with relevant stakeholders in Kampala. The research was undertaken as part of a larger study funded by Oxfam N(O)VIB entitled *Effective Protection of IDPs in Northern Uganda: Knowledge and Skills for Implementation of the IDP Policy and the Return of IDPs in Safety and Dignity*. The research team consisted of Peter Iranya then of the Makerere University Institute for Social Research (MISR), and Joel Ng, Moses Chrispus Okello, Suzan Ombaru, and Fred Ssekandi of the Refugee Law Project. The report was written by Moses Chrispus Okello and Joel Ng with valuable input from Lucy Hovil, Zachary Lomo, Chris Dolan, Balkees Jarrah and Noah Gottschalk. The authors are grateful to the National Council for Science and Technology for permission to conduct the study.**

## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>REPORT SUMMARY .....</b>                         | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>                          | <b>4</b>  |
| 1.1    METHODOLOGY.....                             | 5         |
| 1.2    BACKGROUND: CONFLICT IN ADJUMANI.....        | 6         |
| <b>2 NATURE OF DISPLACEMENT .....</b>               | <b>8</b>  |
| 2.1    IDPs LIVING WITH HOST COMMUNITIES.....       | 10        |
| 2.2    UNRECOGNISED CAMPS.....                      | 11        |
| 2.3    OFFICIAL CAMPS .....                         | 12        |
| <b>3 LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>    | <b>12</b> |
| 3.1    INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES: GAPS .....         | 12        |
| 3.2    COORDINATION .....                           | 15        |
| 3.3    LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES .....              | 15        |
| 3.4    PROTECTION CONCERNS OF IDPs IN ADJUMANI..... | 18        |
| 3.5    IDP CAMPS AS A PROTECTION STRATEGY .....     | 19        |
| <b>4 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE.....</b>                 | <b>20</b> |
| 4.1    STATISTICAL PROBLEMS .....                   | 20        |
| 4.2    PROBLEMS WITH DISTRIBUTION .....             | 22        |
| 4.3    RELIEF VERSUS DEVELOPMENT .....              | 24        |
| 4.4    “DEPENDENCY”.....                            | 25        |
| <b>5 LIVELIHOODS .....</b>                          | <b>26</b> |
| 5.1    LAND ISSUES .....                            | 26        |
| 5.2    NATURAL RESOURCE PRESSURE .....              | 27        |
| 5.3    OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES .....              | 28        |
| <b>6 DURABLE SOLUTIONS.....</b>                     | <b>29</b> |
| 6.1    RETURN.....                                  | 30        |
| <b>7 CONCLUSION.....</b>                            | <b>31</b> |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>                            | <b>32</b> |

**Glossary of Abbreviations**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| AHA       | Africa Humanitarian Action   |
| CSOPNU    | Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda           |
| DAR       | Development Assistance for Refugees                                |
| DASS      | Danish Assistance to the Self-Reliance Strategy                    |
| DISO      | District Internal Security Officer                                 |
| DDMC      | District Disaster Management Committee                             |
| DDPC      | District Disaster Preparedness Coordinator                         |
| DPDMC     | Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Management Commission           |
| DRC       | Danish Refugee Council   |
| GoU       | Government of Uganda   |
| HRPP      | Human Rights Promotion and Protection Sub-Committee                |
| IDP       | Internally Displaced Person  |
| IOM       | International Organization for Migration                           |
| LC        | Local Council(lor)   |
| LDU       | Local Defence Unit   |
| LRA       | Lord's Resistance Army   |
| LWF       | Lutheran World Federation  |
| NCA       | Norwegian Church Aid   |
| NGO       | Non-governmental Organisation                                      |
| NRA/M     | National Resistance Army/Movement                                  |
| NRC/IDMC  | Norwegian Refugee Council Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  |
| OHCHR     | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights    |
| OPM       | Office of the Prime Minister                                       |
| RDC       | Resident District Commissioner                                     |
| SCDMC     | Sub-County Disaster Management Committee                           |
| SGBV      | Sexual and Gender-Based Violence                                   |
| SPLA/M    | Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement                            |
| SRS       | Self-Reliance Strategy   |
| UNHCR     | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                      |
| UN OCHA   | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| UNRF I/II | Uganda National Rescue Front I/II                                  |
| UPDA      | Uganda People's Democratic Army                                    |
| UPDF      | Uganda People's Defence Forces                                     |
| URCS      | Uganda Red Cross Society   |
| WFP       | World Food Program   |
| WNBF      | West Nile Bank Front   |

## 1 INTRODUCTION

While Adjumani District is home to one of the largest refugee populations in Uganda,<sup>1</sup> internal displacement in the district remains largely unaddressed,<sup>2</sup> although the last reliable registration counted 41,005 IDPs.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Adjumani has been largely overlooked in national and international discussions about internal displacement caused by the northern Uganda conflict.<sup>4</sup> If northern Uganda was a ‘forgotten crisis,’ Adjumani district was one which was never even acknowledged, let alone forgotten, despite the strains it put on local government and NGOs operating at a local level.

The reasons for this are four-fold. First, because the conflict was generally characterised as an ‘Acholi problem’ and Adjumani District, where the Madi are the ethnic majority, was therefore sidelined from the discussion. Second, unlike other war-affected districts where fighting took place near town centres, insecurity in Adjumani existed mostly at the outer edge of the district, particularly at the southern and eastern border with Gulu. Third, internal displacement in Adjumani did not occur on a scale comparable to that of other districts in northern Uganda such as Pader, Gulu, Kitgum, Lira, or even Apac. Instead, Adjumani experienced small-scale displacement, typically in the form of individuals and/or families moving to safer areas where they had relatives or family connections. Fourthly, the government had not instituted a policy which called for the transfer of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) into camps, where the effects of displacement would be more visible. Therefore, at least superficially, the district appeared to be generally less affected by the northern conflict. The resultant lack of awareness was compounded by the fact that varying security conditions in and around the district often precluded the steady presence of humanitarian actors.

Our research findings indicate that these little acknowledged IDPs are in need of protection and assistance similar to displaced persons in other districts of northern Uganda. Although the majority of IDPs in Adjumani have not been registered, this paper demonstrates a clear pattern of conflict-induced displacement in the district dating back decades. Even since the September 2005 registration there had been fresh population displacements and movements in Ofua (around Itirikwa parish) and Dzaipi (from Ogolo and Arinyapi) sub-counties.<sup>5</sup> At the time of research,

---

<sup>1</sup> Relief Web, for instance, lists 63,233 refugees in Adjumani as of June 2005, second only to Arua with 65,755. <http://reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/JOPA6FMDT7?OpenDocument&rc=1&cc=uga>.

<sup>2</sup> Issues linked to internal displacement did not yield significant attention until a 7 January 2006 attack on a wedding celebration which gave rise to fresh displacement and the subsequent creation of two official IDP camps.

<sup>3</sup> DASS/IOM, September 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Most major reports on northern Uganda focus on districts in the Acholi, Teso, and/or Lango regions. See, for instance, Robert Gersony, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda*, Kampala: USAID, August 1997; Morten Bøås and Anne Hatløy, *Northern Uganda Internally Displaced Persons Profiling Study*, FAFO report commissioned by OPM, September 2005; CSOPNU, *Nowhere to Hide: Humanitarian Protection Threats in Northern Uganda*, December 2004; and Human Rights Watch, *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, September 2005. However, some reports have made reference to the impact of the LRA on the district. See, for instance, Lucy Hovil, *Refugees and the Security Situation in Adjumani District*, RLP Working Paper No. 2, June 2001, and Lucy Hovil and Joanna R. Quinn, *Peace First, Justice Later: Traditional Justice in Northern Uganda*, RLP Working Paper No. 17, July 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Adjumani District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) meeting, 27 January 2006 (Minutes on file with RLP). For further discussion on the numbers of IDPs, see 4.1 Statistical Problems below.

the main cause of displacement was a general climate of insecurity mainly manifested by acts of violence or threats committed against the population by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Human rights problems faced by IDPs in Adjumani are linked to a number of factors including: poor security and protection; marginalisation as outsiders; inadequate food, shelter, and health care or access to education for children; and a lack property identification documents. Their vulnerable situation places IDPs at risk of a number of related violations. In the absence of external assistance, the majority of displaced persons in the district have attempted to support themselves through their own means or with the help of extended families. While authorities have provided some assistance, it has been unreliable and insufficient. Overall, therefore, there has been no coherent humanitarian response.

This study seeks to highlight both the scale and nature of internal displacement in Adjumani district and contrasts the condition of IDPs there with other IDP-hosting districts. In the course of the analysis, the paper will aim to assess how government policies and the level humanitarian response have impacted the protection concerns of IDPs in Adjumani. With the prospect of peace for northern Uganda on the horizon, it is imperative that Adjumani should not be forgotten in any subsequent processes of return, reconciliation and rehabilitation.

## 1.1 Methodology

This report is based on field research conducted in Adjumani district between 22 January and 6 February 2006. The research team consisted of Peter Iranya then of the Makerere University Institute for Social Research (MISR) and Joel Ng, Moses Chrispus Okello, Suzan Ombaru, and Fred Ssekandi of the Refugee Law Project. The work was undertaken as part of a larger study funded by Oxfam N(O)VIB entitled *Effective Protection of IDPs in Northern Uganda: Knowledge and Skills for Implementation of the IDP Policy and the Return of IDPs in Safety and Dignity*. This paper was written by Moses Chrispus Okello and Joel Ng with valuable comments from Lucy Hovil, Zachary Lomo and Chris Dolan. Additional editorial assistance was provided by Balkees Jarrah and Noah Gottschalk.

A total of 115 interviews were conducted with key government officials, humanitarian workers, local inhabitants—displaced and non-displaced—as well as with refugees living outside camps. In addition, two focus group discussions were conducted in locales where IDPs were scattered across a wide area and living mostly amongst host communities. The majority of interviews with local people were conducted using a native Madi language speaker. Researchers employed semi-structured interviews guided by an interview map in order to ensure a degree of consistency and comparability between interviews. Questions were drafted to cover specific themes relating to protection and assistance and were modified where appropriate.

To account for the often complex and unique nature of displacement, 17 different parishes were visited in the district. The parishes were: Biyaya, Central, and Cesia in Adjumani town council; Esia and Lajopi in Adropi sub-county; Kiraba, Maaji, Mugi, and Opejo in Ciforo sub-county; Liri, Arinyapi, and Mgbere in Dzaipi sub-county; Itirikwa, Odu, and Zoka in Ofua sub-county; and Lewa and Meliaderi in Pakele sub-county.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> The specific circumstances found in these locations are covered in a separate briefing paper, *Briefing Paper on Displacement in Adjumani*.

RLP presented its initial findings to relevant stakeholders in the course of several debriefings held in Adjumani and Kampala. Participant reactions and comments are incorporated into this report. Follow-up interviews with relevant stakeholders involved in IDP issues or who had conducted recent assessments in the district were also held in Kampala in order to verify preliminary findings. Additionally, key sources in Adjumani were contacted via telephone to obtain updated information prior to publication of this report.<sup>7</sup>

The research team relied on the use of qualitative research methods while recognising that, given time and other constraints such as the relatively small number of interviews conducted, these do not allow for extensive coverage and cannot, therefore, claim to have generated ‘representative’ data for the perceptions of IDPs in Adjumani district. Nevertheless, given the topics and themes under investigation, it was felt that this research approach offered the opportunity to explore the perceptions of internally displaced persons and their hosts, and to investigate the ways in which improvements to their plight could be made.

Following a brief physical and political description of Adjumani, Section 2 provides an overview of the nature of displacement in the district. Section 3 examines the legal framework in which discussions about internal displacement have taken place, especially at the local levels. Section 4 analyses the difficulties surrounding the humanitarian response. In Section 5, the report explores livelihood strategies employed by displaced persons, and Section 6 examines the applicability of durable solutions.

## 1.2 Background: Conflict in Adjumani

Located in Uganda’s West Nile region, Adjumani was created out of Moyo district in 1996. From Uganda’s independence in 1962, the district then known as Madi—which included Moyo and Adjumani—received refugee flows from Sudan owing to the war between various southern Sudanese groups and the Khartoum government.<sup>8</sup> Adjumani district has, therefore, experienced the effects of conflict and subsequent displacement for many decades. Specifically, the district has not only suffered through the civil tensions that have plagued neighbouring Sudan, but has also endured Ugandan political strife that has manifested itself in a number of successive rebel insurgencies. Reverse cross-border displacement from Uganda into Sudan also occurred following the overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> One new concern was that in the recent parliamentary elections, the District voted overwhelmingly for opposition parties and a number of key political positions changed hands as a result. However, it was impossible to assess the full effect of this transition at the time of publication.

<sup>8</sup> The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the SPLA/M and the government of Sudan in January 2005 has raised hopes for a lasting peace in southern Sudan.

<sup>9</sup> Hovil estimates some 80 percent of Adjumani’s population was displaced into Sudan following Obote’s return to power. *Refugees and the Security Situation in Adjumani District*, RLP Working Paper No. 2, June 2001, p. 4. Allen, however, has a lower estimate, approximating that only about 40,000 of the 109,771 ‘returnees’ registered by UNHCR in Moyo in 1986 had actually returned from Sudan. Tim Allen, “A Flight from Refuge: The Return of Refugees from Southern Sudan to Northwest Uganda in the Late 1980s,” in Allen, Tim (ed.), *In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight and Homecoming in Northeast Africa*, London: James Currey, 1996.



By 1986, however, the escalation of the conflict in southern Sudan forced both the Ugandans who had taken refuge there, as well as large numbers of Sudanese nationals, to flee into Adjumani and other parts of West Nile and northern Uganda. In the same year, Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) seized power, resulting in resistance from the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA). Although the transition of power was relatively peaceful throughout the region, a state of lawlessness and banditry nevertheless developed. The instability could generally be attributed to clashes between the NRA and fighters of the then Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF I), which operated in the West Nile.<sup>10</sup> UNRF I ended through dialogue with the Okello regime.

During this period of political transition, Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement—an off-shoot of the UPDA—commenced attacks against civilians in northern Uganda. This group was later succeeded by Joseph Kony's LRA.<sup>11</sup> By 1988, a new group, Uganda National Rescue Front II (UNRF II), which claimed to be a regrouping of UNRF I, was operating in West Nile region.<sup>12</sup> In 1989, violence peaked in Adjumani, when the LRA attacked the central towns of Pakele and Adjumani and captured a senior official of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>13</sup> In 1995 the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF), also initiated raids against civilians in the region. During this period Adjumani largely escaped the effects of the conflict involving the WNBF and UNRF II because of the physical barrier created by River Nile. Instead, affected populations from other districts tended to flow *into* Adjumani in search of safety.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, Adjumani has not been immune to LRA attacks. Right from its inception, the LRA made incursions into the district, operating mostly from the Zoka forest belt and using the corridor through Dzaipi sub-county to pass between Sudan and Uganda.<sup>15</sup> Between 2000 and 2003, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) reported 52 violent confrontations involving the LRA.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, an open letter to President Museveni by the Adjumani District Local Council reported over 40 attacks in 2004 alone.<sup>17</sup> Adjumani town itself was attacked on 18 June 2003.<sup>18</sup> Twenty-nine attacks were recorded in Dzaipi sub-county between 1986 and 2005, with concentrations of incidents occurring in the late 1980s, 1996-1997 and 2004-2005.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Zachary Lomo & Lucy Hovil, *Negotiating Peace: Resolution of Conflicts in Uganda's West Nile Region*, Refugee Law Project Working Paper 12, June 2004, p.4, and Allen, 1996, p.232.

<sup>11</sup> Information about the armed groups operating in northern Uganda, which culminated in the formation of the LRA can be found in Lomo & Hovil, *Behind the Violence: Causes, Consequences and the Search for Solutions to the War in Northern Uganda*, Refugee Law Project Working Paper 11, February 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Detailed background to these conflicts is addressed in Lomo & Hovil, June 2004.

<sup>13</sup> The official was later released. Allen, 1996, p. 232.

<sup>14</sup> This forced displacement continued until December 2002 when UNRF II finally reached a peace agreement with the Ugandan government.

<sup>15</sup> UN OCHA Contact Group meeting, 8 February 2006.

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR, *Self-Reliance Strategy (1999-2003) for Refugee Hosting Areas in Moyo, Arua and Adjumani Districts, Uganda: Report of the Mid-Term Review*, April 2004, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Dated 17 March, 2005, No. COU/212/01

<sup>18</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council/Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (NRC/IDMC), *Uganda: Relief Efforts Hampered in One of the World's Worst Internal Displacement Crises*, December 2005, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> Dzaipi Sub-County Local Government/Council, *Security Meeting Held in Dzaipi Sub-County on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2005*, Dzaipi: Dzaipi Local Government, March 2005.

At the time of research, it was therefore obvious that the LRA was the major cause of insecurity and displacement in Adjumani, although Adjumani has clearly endured political strife that has manifested itself in a number of successive rebel insurgencies. Parts of the district have also been affected by units of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) operating within Uganda.<sup>20</sup> In addition, several respondents also described incidents of cattle-rustling by groups allegedly from Sudan, aggravating an already volatile situation. The ongoing peace talks in Juba, even if successful, are therefore not a guarantee of stability in this region. The effect of decades of violence in Adjumani has however remained under reported and the ensuing humanitarian situation in largely unaddressed. In fact, Adjumani rarely features in debates about conflict on northern Uganda altogether. This is primarily because Adjumani is administratively located in West Nile region although it lies on the eastern banks of River Nile and is geographically part of the Greater Northern Uganda region.

## 2 NATURE OF DISPLACEMENT

The irregular nature of displacement in Adjumani is exemplified by three factors that are interrelated: multiple displacements, small-scale displacement, and the range of settlement strategies employed by IDPs. Findings demonstrate that most registered IDPs have moved several times, and as a result are often difficult to identify and therefore assist. Moreover, because displacement in Adjumani was initially small-scale in character, IDPs were not relocated en masse to camps as was the case in other areas of northern Uganda. Instead they employed varied settlement strategies which effectively made them less visible to humanitarian actors. Specifically, some IDPs were displaced from rural areas into town centres and others into public buildings, while some moved into relatively safer villages where they had extended family or other connections. At times IDPs living in vacated refugee settlements as well as those who moved into official camps were immediately recognisable to authorities. By and large, however, the factors which shape displacement in Adjumani have no doubt played a role in making the extent of the crisis indiscernible.

The majority of displacement in Adjumani has been limited to movement within the district itself. In addition, in the absence of a clear local government policy on displacement,<sup>21</sup> IDPs have tended to move toward sub-county centres, nearer to military installations, and away from the insecure border with Gulu district. In fact, findings revealed that many internally displaced persons attempted to settle close to their original lands, in the hope of returning there during the rainy season.<sup>22</sup> Amongst the current IDP population in Adjumani, displacement occurred at relatively low levels prior to 2004. Of the existing IDP households, IOM/DASS reported that 21 percent were displaced in 2003 or earlier, as opposed to 79 percent in 2004 and 2005.<sup>23</sup> Official 'transit centres'<sup>24</sup> were only established in the wake of attacks on 7 January 2006, and thus those

---

<sup>20</sup> Interview with local government official, Dzaipi, 24 January 2006.

<sup>21</sup> The stance against the creation of IDP camps is discussed in section 3.5, Local Government Policies, below.

<sup>22</sup> For example, interview with internally displaced woman, Dzaipi, 24 January 2006, or interview with internally displaced man, Pakele, 28 January 2006.

<sup>23</sup> IOM/DASS, September 2005. However, statistics did not include persons who were displaced multiple times or who had since returned to their place of origin.

<sup>24</sup> See section 3.3 below on Local Government Policies for discussion of the terminology surrounding IDP-hosting areas.

who moved prior to those attacks had employed a variety of other relocation strategies. While it is generally difficult to classify IDP movements in Adjumani, three broad categories emerge:<sup>25</sup>

1. IDPs living with host communities
2. IDPs living in ‘unrecognised camps’
3. IDPs living in ‘official camps’<sup>26</sup>

Multiple displacements experienced by IDPs are a feature common to all three categories. Interviews showed that these compound displacements could be attributed to a number of factors, including security concerns and livelihood objectives. For instance, one internally displaced man described how safety concerns informed his movements:

In 1993, the LRA rebels attacked our village, destroyed property and abducted people. This scared our community. Then we left the place and settled about five kilometres away from the place [at Kalakala]. Then in March 2004 the LRA rebels came in big numbers to our place and a gunship was used for killing them. That forced our people to leave the place and then come to Silili behind Mgbere Central. Then finally in March 2005, [International] Women’s Day, the rebels again came here and killed seven people and abducted two people who have not come [back] till today. For me, due to such long movement, I went up to Elema settlement in Onigo village, Miniki parish and then I came back here leaving my family behind in Onigo village and come to graze my domestic animals since I don’t have land there.<sup>27</sup>

Another IDP was motivated by both security and livelihood matters:

I came from Adidi-Busia four kilometres from this place last year in April due to [the] LRA rebels’ attack where they killed one person in 2003 and looted all our property. This time we went to Pakele [town] centre but due to hunger we again came back and started planting crops and taking the food for the children in towns. Again they attacked us and looted all the property in 2004 October. Then we again went back to the centre and built semi-permanent structures in Meliaderi village. But again we came back to our gardens to cultivate our land in 2005. [In] January they again attacked us and then we came here in April.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, while it was true that some IDP movements had been instigated by economic and social issues, interviews showed that such causes still had their root in the pursuit of security. Furthermore, a kind of ‘domino effect’ was also cited as a potential reason for moving:

We feel unsafe because right now many people from the neighbouring village ran away due to LRA disturbance and therefore we are the only village who are left on this side. This scares us a lot.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> For further information on the patterns of displacement, including that of refugees within the district, see Refugee Law Project, *Briefing Paper on Displacement in Adjumani*, forthcoming.

<sup>26</sup> Two official camps were established at Ogolo and Arinyapi following attacks in Dzaipi sub-county on 7 January 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Dzaipi, 25 January 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with internally displaced woman, Pakele, 31 January 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with internally displaced woman, Ciforo, 27 January 2006.

## 2.1 IDPs living with host communities

IDPs who lived among host communities could be divided into two groups: those who had been recently displaced by the LRA conflict, and those displaced during the course of previous conflicts, but had since settled in their areas of displacement.

The research team was able to visit IDPs in communities in Piyaru and Unna villages as well as in Biyaya and Lajopi-Cesia in Adjumani town council. At the time of research, there was no targeted assistance provided to these groups, although their existence was known to both district officials and humanitarian agencies. Generally these displaced persons arrived to their destinations at different times and did not necessarily originate from the same village. Moreover, interviews showed that IDPs who had been displaced over a short period of time typically took advantage of a kinship relation to negotiate land for habitation and/or cultivation. For example, Unna village was constructed on government farmland that was leased to local residents, who in turn sublet it to IDPs who arrived between 2004 and 2005. Despite being able to acquire land in this fashion, IDPs in Unna expressed concern that it could be repossessed: “If the government reclaims like [they did] in Moyo, where will we go?”<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, displaced persons renting houses around Adjumani town in Biyaya and Lajopi-Cesia did not exhibit the same anxieties. In fact, research showed that these IDPs generally lived in better conditions and had access to economic activities in the town centre.

Some IDPs who had been displaced over an extended period lived in Ciforo sub-county<sup>31</sup> in a relatively secure area close to the Nile. Research revealed that this population was scattered over a wide area, and that many of the IDPs obtained land through their own negotiation. Moreover, several IDPs had been there long enough to have no intentions of returning.<sup>32</sup> However, despite having lived among their host communities for many years, these long-term IDPs tended to be marginalised as outsiders.<sup>33</sup> In fact, they frequently faced difficulties accessing humanitarian or development assistance targeted at their hosts. Other long-term IDPs who were forced to move from Moyo as a result of the WNBF or UNRF II conflicts were found renting huts around Adjumani town in Biyaya and Lajopi-Cesia. This population also faced similar problems obtaining humanitarian support. While some of these displaced persons were evasive about the length of time they intended to remain, others in Lajopi-Cesia expressed the intention to return to their places of origin.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Quote by internally displaced man during focus group discussion, Adropi, 1 February 2006.

<sup>31</sup> While there were more resettled IDPs in other counties of Adjumani, field research could not be conducted there due to logistical and time constraints as IDPs were reportedly scattered in few numbers in practically every village in the district.

<sup>32</sup> Focus group discussion, Ciforo, 4 February 2006.

<sup>33</sup> During the course of the 4 February 2006 Ciforo focus group discussion, RLP was told that IDPs' names were listed in the minutes of development programmes' meetings, but that the actual beneficiaries were always indigenous people. Furthermore, one man lamented, “But if you keep complaining, the locals may make you go away because you are a nuisance.”

<sup>34</sup> For example, interview with internally displaced man, Adjumani town, 3 February 2006.

## 2.2 Unrecognised Camps

IDPs in Adjumani district have settled together in different types of encampments. Some camps are officially recognised and have been built with the assistance of the government. Others have been constructed in a makeshift fashion by the displaced themselves and are not a formal matter of concern to the authorities. Although officially ‘unrecognised,’ this latter grouping of IDPs has been intermittently supported by local officials and humanitarian workers. In Adjumani, unrecognised camps take two forms: those that exist in abandoned refugee settlements and those that have been constructed by the IDPs themselves.

Some IDPs who have taken advantage of vacant refugee camps were found in the area around Indriani barracks in Pakele sub-county (Olua Site 5). Field research revealed that although refugees abandoned these settlements for reasons of insecurity, repatriation, or the availability of better services elsewhere, IDPs continued to settle there. According to interviews with IDPs, the UPDF instructed them to settle there “for easy security, monitoring and protection.”<sup>35</sup> Despite these assurances, however, insecurity likewise plagued the displaced. Furthermore, lack of protection triggered the temporary closure of Lewa, Okawa, and Melijo primary schools, thereby hindering the education of IDP children in these areas. Furthermore, the remote location of alternative schools frustrated any alternative solutions.

Other displaced persons have relocated to the area around Itirikwa stream, opposite the road to Kolididi refugee settlement, forming the newest unofficial IDP camp in Adjumani. Similar to the situation in Pakele sub-county, IDPs around Itirikwa stream also took advantage of pre-existing refugee structures such as huts, a health unit, boreholes, and a primary school building. In addition, displaced persons were also in the process of constructing supplementary huts.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from benefiting from pre-existing refugee settlements, IDPs have also erected clusters of huts resembling camps elsewhere in Adjumani including at the central towns of Dzaipi, Zoka, and Maaji<sup>37</sup> centrals. At Maaji central, IDPs confirmed that the camp had been established independently of DDMC planning:

This plan came by itself from their minds, not someone who was saying, “That is the centre, we come here.” Because of that fear [of the conflict], it came to their minds that they should gather here, not [a] government plan.<sup>38</sup>

This was corroborated by a local official, who noted:

Actually Masa development was just last year—mid-last year or towards August-September or June-July, when the Masa scenario came up. But even the political leaders were not of the deal [did not approve]. But the people felt even if it’s not legal, they felt it was safe for them to stay

---

<sup>35</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Pakele, 28 January 2006.

<sup>36</sup> At the time of research, the construction of the huts, which began in December 2005, was ongoing, with very few huts having been completed.

<sup>37</sup> Maaji central’s IDP camp is also known as “Masa”.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with internally displaced woman, Ciforo, 26 January 2006.

there. Of course you can't force them out. We, the DDMC went to help them out—with some development partners, we sent some basic relief.<sup>39</sup>

Data collected indicated that the settlements at Dzaipi, Zoka, and Maaji have experienced divergent levels of assistance from the government. For example, in Dzaipi central there were reports that the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) was refusing to provide assistance because they wanted those located there to move into the newly-created camps. Thus IDPs residing there expressed concern that they would be forced to move to Ogolo or Arinyapi, pointing to threats of eviction by the military to that effect.<sup>40</sup> In Zoka, although authorities provided the IDP settlement with monthly food rations, the camp itself nonetheless remained unrecognised. Assistance at Maaji camp was granted largely on the basis of requests by local government to NGOs working with the refugee populations.

It should also be noted that along with the unofficial status of all three of these camps, most were also subject to non-functioning social services. For instance, the Maaji settlement lacked any staff to operate its health centre. Furthermore, all three camps lacked camp committees or representation due to their unofficial status.

### **2.3 Official Camps**

Authorities were in the process of building the two official camps of Ogolo and Arinyapi following the 7 January 2006 attacks. Official status afforded residents of these camps the attention of district officials on the DDMC, the immediate construction of boreholes and latrines, the establishment of camp committees, and the execution of further needs-assessments.

The construction of the camps enabled other displaced populations who reportedly fled to Moyo and Arua to return to Dzaipi sub-county. However, these spontaneous movements prompted concerns about congestion among IDPs—specifically surrounding instructions by the UPDF that displaced persons were to construct their huts less than fifteen metres apart. The DDMC voiced misgivings about these directives and remained involved in discussions with the UPDF with regard to camp planning.<sup>41</sup>

## **3 LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Institutional Structures: Gaps**

Despite some positive efforts towards formal institutionalisation of the government's National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons [hereinafter, the National IDP Policy],<sup>42</sup> there remains a significant gap between the policies and structures developed and the reality faced by displaced persons on the ground. In Adjumani, continuing problems linked to institutions such the DDMC

---

<sup>39</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 27 January 2006.

<sup>40</sup> The issue of forced evictions was raised by a local government official at the RLP Debriefing to district stakeholders, 3 February 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Adjumani DDMC meeting, 27 January 2006.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance, Lucy Hovil & Moses Chrispus Okello, "Only Peace Can Restore the Confidence of the Displaced", March 2006, Section 2.

and SCDMC include: ineffective measures to prevent displacement from occurring in the first place; serious protection concerns throughout the district; the inability of many displaced persons to access assistance due to distinctive settlement strategies; the need to assist those who have been displaced multiple times; and insufficient attention toward finding durable solutions for those who remain displaced for a longer period of time.

The DDMC in Adjumani has regularly suffered from resource constraints and operational impediments. Despite the fact that it was working to develop a long-term strategy for the management of the new camps of Ogolo and Arinyapi as well as responding with commendable swiftness to the 7 January attacks,<sup>43</sup> the DDMC faced many obstacles. One government representative articulated these limitations: “There are so many activities taking place. However the DDMC have not enough strength to support the IDP camps but efforts were made to go and find out how the camps are working in order to come and train people on IDP camps.”<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, general meeting mismanagement plagued the Adjumani District Disaster Management Committee. Some officials mandated by the National IDP Policy to participate in disaster management responses were often unaware of the schedule of meetings or indeed their specific roles under the National IDP Policy.<sup>45</sup> One senior politician who was authorised to mobilise humanitarian assistance under the policy complained that he neither had access to the minutes of DDMC meetings, nor was he aware of any explicit directives to participate in the meetings. Research also showed that UPDF and other security forces rarely attended DDMC meetings, if at all, causing great frustration in the district. District officials also voiced discontent that these institutions often made decisions separate from the DDMC. Finally, although the DDMC convened regularly, evidence suggested a serious misuse of time initiating the meetings.<sup>46</sup>

In addition, research revealed that many officials were not operating according to relevant national humanitarian legal frameworks and that very few had heard of the National IDP Policy. In the words of one humanitarian worker: “Not many people are aware of it [the National IDP Policy] because displacement has only just come here... So it’s no wonder that there are few copies [the National IDP Policy] around.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, although the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) had trained some district officials on the principles of the policy, the training was limited to a few individuals and had not yet extended to the sub-county level. The RLP was also unable to find evidence that these individuals had transmitted the information gained to their colleagues. Not surprisingly, many respondents referred to the lack of training on the National IDP Policy and ineffective disaster management as serious problems that need to be urgently addressed. In the words of one respondent:

---

<sup>43</sup> RLP was able to obtain the Districts Disaster Management Plan and other documents drafted in the wake of displacement.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with OPM official, Pakele, 23 January 2006.

<sup>45</sup> For instance, Uganda Red Cross Society officials later told the RLP that they had not been informed of the DDMC meeting, nor had they been trained on their organisational mandate under the National IDP Policy.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, the 27 January meeting started three hours late.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with humanitarian worker, Adjumani town, 2 February 2006.

I think that some kind of training is important, like highlights on these laws, and also to share experience of those who have been handling this situation in neighbouring districts. Like at Pabbo, they do a lot more—they must have been empowered.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the numerous obstacles facing the DDMC in Adjumani, the district had yet to establish Sub-County Disaster Management Committees. While officials had begun developing SCDMCs, at the time of research, only a few individuals had been identified to participate, and of these, none had commenced their duties. In the words of one sub-county official: “We don’t have really—we have DDMC, but ideally we should have the Sub-County Disaster Management Committee. We had names supposed to be on the committee, but it has not really materialised.”<sup>49</sup> Further, according to another local government official, the formation of the different committees was delayed due to the desire to first train those individual identified to participate on the SCDMC.<sup>50</sup> However, it should be noted that this consideration is not a formal requirement under the National IDP Policy and thus may act as an unnecessary impediment to its implementation.

Furthermore, findings revealed that the SCDMC in Adjumani lacked consistent IDP representation. The National IDP Policy stipulates that, “One male and one female representative of all IDPs physically resident in one of the camps in the sub-county shall be members of the SCDMC.” While displaced persons resident within official camps in Adjumani have identified individuals to lead different sectoral committees, those living in unofficial camps did not establish similar structures. Moreover, because most of the IDPs in Adjumani were living with relatives and friends, rigid adherence to the requirement that they be physically resident in camps has obstructed the participation of the majority of displaced persons in the district.<sup>51</sup>

Aside from the difficulties faced by the DDMC and SCDMC in Adjumani, findings also indicated the absence of a number of other critical structures provided for under the National IDP Policy. In fact, with the exception of the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) working group for refugees, human rights protection structures catering to the specific needs of IDPs were largely missing. Instead, according to one local official, government institutions such as the police and judiciary tended to fill the gaps: “If a person’s rights have been violated, you don’t single him out as an IDP, but as an ordinary member of the population.”<sup>52</sup> In addition, another local administrator pointed out that human rights promotion and protection is currently being undertaken by the government Probation & Welfare office. Unfortunately, however, findings indicate that its chief officer is currently on loan to an international non-governmental organisation (NGO).

Other IDP-specific protection committees such as the Human Rights Promotion and Protection Sub-Committee (HRPP), whose stipulated function it is to monitor and ensure the protection of IDPs, were absent. In addition, observations showed that the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) is heavily under-staffed and under-funded. Chapter Four of the National IDP Policy stipulates

---

<sup>48</sup> Interview with local councillor, Pakele, 30 January 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with sub-county official, 30 January 2006.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 27 January 2006.

<sup>51</sup> See for instance, Sections 2.4 and 2.5.1 of the National IDP Policy.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 27 January 2006.



that the URCS “has a special role to play in Internally Displaced Persons settlements as an auxiliary to Governmental capability.” However, despite their presence in Adjumani, interviews with URCS staff revealed glaring weaknesses in their operational activities, especially the resources available to them.

### 3.2 Coordination

With respect to coordination, it was noted that UNHCR was coordinating organisations working with refugees through its monthly meetings, and that the organisation was assessing the situation of IDPs in Adjumani with a view to identifying areas of intervention.<sup>53</sup> The OPM office in Adjumani was also expanding its activities to cover IDP protection. Coordination of humanitarian activities for IDPs nonetheless remains a serious challenge. The District Disaster Preparedness Coordinator (DDPC), authorised to coordinate protection and assistance, was found to be overburdened, fielding responsibility as the DDPC for the entire West Nile region in addition to being employed as the district Probation & Welfare Officer. The resultant lack of leadership in coordination was therefore cited by some agency staff as proof of disinterest in the protection and assistance of IDPs. It was observed that, in order to fill this vacuum, the World Food Program (WFP) had taken the lead by availing its resources to facilitate movement of district and other organisational members for camp assessments. By and large, however, individual organisations are operating independently, with no clear idea of what their counterparts are doing.

### 3.3 Local Government Policies

Prior to 2004, the Adjumani District Council maintained a policy against the creation of IDP camps. Following renewed LRA incursion into the district in 2004, however, the security situation in Adjumani progressively worsened, resulting in the fresh displacement of up to 54,460 people, the closure of 11 primary schools in Dzaipi, Pakele, Ofua, and Ciforo sub-counties, and food insecurity in the more peaceful sub-county of Adropi.<sup>54</sup> Following this displacement, and after yet another attack on 9 March 2005, spontaneous unrecognised camps sprang up in various sub-counties. Thus in Masa, Ayiri, and Lewa, camps were in existence prior to the January 2006 LRA attack<sup>55</sup> which led to the displacement of between 4,000 and 9,000 people.<sup>56</sup> Until this later attack, Adjumani District Council had maintained a policy of self-settlement or letting IDPs settle among their kin and relatives. As noted by a senior local government official, “initially we encouraged people to melt into society...The council was not of the view for [*sic*] IDPs [camps].”<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> UNHCR’s involvement with IDPs in Adjumani was only announced at the DDMC meeting on 27 January 2006 and so was only in the initial stages. The process of extending their engagement countrywide had begun in mid-2005.

<sup>54</sup> Adjumani District Local Government, *District Development Plan 2005-2008*, 2005, p. 36. Note also that after the profiling study conducted by IOM, the number of IDPs in Adjumani was reported to be at 41,000.

<sup>55</sup> Minutes of a DDMC meeting held in Adjumani, 27 January 2006. According to one individual in the meeting, Masa camp had been in existence since April 2005: just because some officials nationally were unaware of its presence did not mean the camp did not exist.

<sup>56</sup> See minutes of the DDMC Meeting, Adjumani, 27 January 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with senior local government official, Adjumani town, 25 January 2006.

Indeed the rationale not to form camps was two-fold. First, having observed the unacceptable humanitarian conditions of camp residents in the neighbouring district of Gulu, many local government officials in Adjumani were reluctant to create or recognise existing camps. One local government official said:

Initially, the district policy was not to create camps due to problems associated with camps: hygiene, moral decay, and psycho-social trauma. But recent attacks, on 7<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2006 resulted in the creation of transit camps because the people want to temporarily settle in Ogolo and Arinyapi, Zoka, Ayiri, Indriani, Lewa... My view is that these camps should be discouraged for varied reasons. (1) Protection issues—there are no services, no shelter, no education, inadequate water and sanitation. (2) Food is being provided by WFP but it leads to dependency syndrome. (3) The settlement pattern leads to decadence—children defecating here etc., the associated high risk of fire outbreak in camps, because the settlements are closed to themselves—for instance in Pabbo.<sup>58</sup>

This opinion was reiterated by other local government officials, who, even after the creation of camps, maintained that camps should never have been encouraged. In the words of another official:

I personally don't feel that it is good to be in the camps—by our African setting, no. That kind of congestion is totally unacceptable. The house is very tiny; you are forced to share one small house. The youth are always drinking because there is no work. If you go away for a short period of time you are not comfortable whether your woman is safe.<sup>59</sup>

Compared to other districts in northern Uganda where the rationale behind an encampment policy as a means to protect IDPs has been questioned, the initial decision by the Adjumani District Council to let IDPs “melt into the society”<sup>60</sup> could be seen as progressive. Indeed, resistance to the creation of camps did not only come from within the district. Several people interviewed noted that some faith-based groups criticised the idea, arguing that conditions in IDP camps are often deplorable and may lead to an unjustified concentration of people and a loss in productivity.<sup>61</sup> Some IDPs interviewed also said that they were reluctant to go to the camps as they would make them more visible and therefore more susceptible to LRA attacks.

In the case of Adjumani, however, the decision not to create camps meant that the plight of IDPs remained largely ignored and that their requisite assistance and protection was left to local host families. In fact, this is acknowledged in the Adjumani *District Development Plan* which states, “For too long the issue of IDPs in Adjumani has been an internal issue that has not attracted critical Government and international attention.”<sup>62</sup> This deficit in attention has resulted in a lack of creative ways of assisting and protecting displaced persons outside of camp structures. These alternatives should be studied to provide a better method of tackling the problems of displacement than the encampment policies of other districts.

---

<sup>58</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 24 January 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 24 January 2006.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with senior local government official, Adjumani town, 25 January 2006.

<sup>61</sup> For example, interview with a local council official, Dzaipi, 24 January 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Adjumani District Local Government, *District Development Plan 2005-2008*, 2005.

Following the attack on Dzaipi and the induced encampment of some of the population, the district leadership, partly under pressure from local politicians, recognised two new camps. While most of the movement into these camps was spontaneous and largely induced by the attack, interviews also reveal that some IDPs were forcibly moved to the camps:

The people were not really interested to come and settle in IDPs [camps] especially those who settle in Ogolo. They claimed that there were no attacks around but after some time they were attacked which finally forced them to go to IDPs [camps] although they did not like the idea. So we had to force them to go to the IDPs [camps] which was a struggle because it took long to convince them so we had to involve the district officials and we moved there about seven times and they finally had to come to settle in Ogolo.<sup>63</sup>

According to both the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the National IDP Policy, prohibition from arbitrary displacement is recognised,<sup>64</sup> and in the authors' view, one of the most important aspects of protection by far. If, however, displacement is unavoidable, either because of military imperatives and/or other exigencies, it should be short-lived and should take into consideration IDPs' distinctive protection and assistance needs. This should not curtail other rights due to IDPs as citizens of the country in which they are displaced, or indeed lead to the privileging of IDPs over other nationals.<sup>65</sup> In addition, such protection should not be limited to the duration of encampment: it should take place at all stages, and in particular consider the post-displacement protection needs of the IDP<sup>66</sup> regardless of where they are settled.

At the time of the research, discussions were also centring on the recognition of the other camps created before the 2006 attack. Indeed, because the attack occurred in the lead up to the February 2006 national and parliamentary elections, some local politicians were reportedly urging IDPs to create camps with the objective of manipulating the anticipated humanitarian assistance for political gain. However, in the absence of resources to address the needs of IDPs, wherever or however they were to be settled, some respondents noted that clustering together gave IDPs greater visibility and thus a higher chance of receiving assistance.<sup>67</sup>

Not surprisingly, there was considerable debate in Adjumani as to what these concentrations of IDPs should be called. Many respondents distinguished between the terms 'transit camps,' 'camp-like structures,' 'camp,' or 'settlements.' In many instances however, the terms were used interchangeably. Of those who chose not to use the term 'settlements,' it would appear that the intention was to differentiate IDP concentrations from refugee settlements, of which there are approximately 30 in Adjumani.<sup>68</sup> The choice of the other terms however appeared to be determined by the humanitarian implications attached to using them and the resultant and often prolonged process for their recognition. Thus, in the words of one district official:

---

<sup>63</sup> Interview with UPDF officer, Dzaipi Central, 25 January 2006.

<sup>64</sup> *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, Section II, Principle 5 and 6.

<sup>65</sup> See for instance, Erin Mooney, "The Concept of Internally Displaced Persons and the Case for Internally Displaced People as a Category", *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 24 Issue 3, UNHCR, 2005.

<sup>66</sup> National IDP Policy, section 3.1.

<sup>67</sup> For example, briefing with two humanitarian workers, Adjumani town, 23 January 2006.

<sup>68</sup> With ongoing repatriation and insecurity, several of the camps have shifted or have been abandoned, with the population moving to other camps elsewhere in the district or in West Nile.

The establishment of these IDP camps was discussed using the IDP policies and there are procedures but in the state of emergency you need to quickly address the issues since there is a long procedure of declaring a place a camp and the government has not recognised the place. That is why people agreed [at] the meeting that it's a temporary "transit camp" since the government has not approved yet.<sup>69</sup>

Whatever the choice of language, however, the RLP observed significant clusters of people in dire need of protection and assistance, the provision of which must not be determined according to bureaucratic language but rather on the basis of need.

### 3.4 Protection Concerns of IDPs in Adjumani

Although the prevalence of protection problems is much less severe in Adjumani compared with the rest of northern Uganda, interviews conducted demonstrate that protection and assistance remain a major cause of concern for IDPs. A number of accounts reveal violations of the rights of IDPs by armed groups (variously referred to as UPDF, LDUs, and local militias), other IDPs, and by their local hosts. Specific issues of concern included sexual and gender-based violence, early marriages—the term most often used by respondents to refer to cases that under Ugandan law would be defined as defilement—the limitation of freedom of movement, forcible relocation, and arbitrary killing. However, as most camps were relatively new and small in size, such incidents were not reported in great numbers.

One IDP described a situation where the UPDF was apparently responsible for forcing congestion in the newly-created Ogolo camp, reporting "harassment by the UPDF: They have given us today to settle close to each other. They have been demolishing houses that are built some 20 metres away from the other."<sup>70</sup> According to the same IDP, the detach commander had told them to build their huts less than 15 metres apart, despite the Sphere-recommended spacing of 45m<sup>2</sup> per *person*.<sup>71</sup> This was independently confirmed at the January DDMC meeting in which it was noted that congestion could still be rectified.

One reason why these incidents occur unabated is because most IDPs in Adjumani are either self-settled or living with host families, and are therefore difficult to distinguish from the rest of the population as having specific protection needs. On the other hand, in the newly-created camps, protection issues are beginning to emerge with some respondents describing violent encounters with the UPDF and LDUs, especially in those locations where there are curfews. However, findings further indicate that IDPs in camps rationalise physical protection as better where they are, while those outside the camps consider their own locations to be more secure. It would, therefore, also appear that IDPs' decisions regarding their choice of residence are made in terms of their perceptions about security and protection.

In addition, the very concept of 'protection' is not clearly understood in Adjumani. The majority of those interviewed approached the concept only from a physical security perspective, noting

---

<sup>69</sup> Interview with UN official, Adjumani town, 26 January 2006.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Dzaipi, 3 February 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, 2004, p. 216. [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

that it is the responsibility of security agencies. For instance, an NGO official interviewed said protection “is still under the OPM and physical protection is also done by the [Resident District Commissioner], [District Internal Security Officer]. ... They assured us in the last week meeting that whenever there is IDPs formed they will provide security through forming the camps and a detach for the IDPs.”<sup>72</sup> While this is largely accurate, it demonstrates only a partial understanding of protection. Its legal aspect, for example, is rarely mentioned and in the course of the interviews was never articulated by any respondent. This absence of a holistic understanding of protection is in part due to the fact that no single organisation—with the exception of the Justice, Peace and Human Rights Commission of the Catholic Church—is working around protection issues for IDPs in Adjumani. Some organisations nonetheless noted that they integrate human rights and protection principles into their programme activities. As demonstrated in previous RLP studies, protection encompasses elements of both physical security and human rights and humanitarian law obligations to protect and ensure the protection of civilians at all times.

### 3.5 IDP Camps as a Protection Strategy

As noted above, the debate surrounding the decision to create IDP camps is premised on the assumption that camps can effectively protect civilians. However, interviews revealed that there was no consensus about how the debate can be resolved beyond ending the conflict. Both IDPs and local government officials advanced various reasons in favour or against camp creation. Of those IDPs who preferred encampment, it would appear their decisions were made in terms of the unrewarding experience of living with their hosts and the lack of assistance brought about by their effective invisibility. As one female IDP said:

The idea of being in the camp is okay since we are getting assistance from the government. This will avoid being insulted by other people who have hosted you but think you are adamant to have their land.<sup>73</sup>

In some instances however, the choice of where to stay, as noted above, was directly related to physical security. Thus, another individual said:

The Dzaipi people wanted to be in IDP camps in 2005 after the killing of people by LRA rebels during the eve of [International] Women’s Day. But right now we are sitting for meeting with the community this Thursdays for security issues and also discuss the concerns on the ideas of forming IDPs camps.<sup>74</sup>

Although the Adjumani District Council succumbed to pressure to create camps, some local government officials were non-committal on the idea as a protective measure. As one individual argued:

---

<sup>72</sup> Interview with humanitarian worker, Adjumani town, 23 January 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with internally displaced woman, Dzaipi, 24 January 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with local council official, Dzaipi, 24 January 2006.

I don't buy that argument because (1) camps have been attacked and a lot of people killed. For instance Barlonyo,<sup>75</sup> what kind of protection is that? (2) When you establish a camp, you need to inform security to establish a detach. For me a detach is false protection because the main cause of insecurity has not been solved. So what kind of protection is there? If you solve the root cause, then you protect. But you are treating symptoms not the cause of the disease!<sup>76</sup>

Or in the words of another woman: "We still fear because in the first place, the UPDF soldiers were around when the LRA attacked us but nothing was done to stop them from torturing and looting our properties."<sup>77</sup> This was exacerbated by the low physical numbers of soldiers present at each camp, often numbering less than ten and not permanently posted to the sites.

## 4 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

To date, humanitarian assistance in the district has primarily been focused on refugees. This was due in part to the high numbers of refugees coupled with the low levels of internal displacement prior to 2004. One official admitted:

They give assistance mostly to refugees, and usually they assist IDPs on request, when there is an incident. But thereafter they stop. But they continue to assist refugees—these refugees get food monthly, but these IDPs may get food once or twice and that is it.<sup>78</sup>

Another official complained, "Something has been done for the people, but I call that 'in patches'—it is not coherent, not continuous."<sup>79</sup> However, with the growing numbers of IDPs, several humanitarian organisations such as WFP and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) have begun both to acknowledge their need for assistance as well as to expand their mandates to include IDPs.<sup>80</sup> Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA), although initially involved with refugee programmes, was also providing medical assistance without discrimination. There was some concern, however, about the under-utilisation of resources as services for refugees were now phasing down: large numbers of vehicles around Adjumani town were simply left to fall into disrepair—one humanitarian worker privately described it as leaving the vehicles to rot. Such difficulties could be attributed to the fact that some NGOs lacked the mandate to switch assistance from refugees to IDPs, according to where the needs were greatest.

### 4.1 Statistical Problems

While there are always problems ascertaining specific numbers of displaced people in a given area, the varied settlement patterns of IDPs in Adjumani presents a special challenge, which affects humanitarian service delivery and planning. Difficulties are three-fold. First, some self-settled IDPs were often indistinguishable from local non-displaced populations, thereby not

---

<sup>75</sup> In March 2004, Barlonyo IDP camp in Lira District experienced the largest massacre of civilians in a single day with final estimates reporting almost 300 civilians killed. See "UGANDA: Fear sends scores of IDPs fleeing from camps into Lira town," IRIN News, 24 March 2004.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 24 January 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Dzaipi, 24 January 2006.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with local government official, Ofua, 30 January 2006.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with local government official, Pakele, 31 January 2006.

<sup>80</sup> The mandate of LWF also encompasses IDP-hosting communities.

appearing to have any humanitarian needs specific to them. Second, IDPs—especially those who had not been officially recognised—regularly moved in search of casual work or returned to their farms each day and were therefore rarely at the centres until evening. Thirdly, it was known among humanitarian agencies, the DDMC, and local government officials that the LCs in the IDP settlements were under pressure to inflate numbers to include their relatives, or indeed hosts, who argued that by taking on the burden of hosting IDPs, they were also entitled to some assistance. As one official admitted:

Because of host communities, there was a tendency to cover them up. From our population statistics we can see this village had this number of people but not constant. [The] Census depends on when we 'got you'. You may find there are some variations. When you call these LCs they will include their relatives. When we took food items to Moyo, the number was inflated actually three times and included people in Moyo district. But in the camp you can go household to household.<sup>81</sup>

Conversely, there were many reported cases of IDPs who had not been registered, either because they were not at the camps on the days of registration, or else they had only been displaced after the registration had been completed. Additional unconfirmed complaints were that those not favoured by the LCs or camp leaders had not been included in the tally.<sup>82</sup> These problems were compounded by the fact that with elections approaching at the time of research, concerns were raised that lists may have been manipulated to include more people to influence the outcomes. Thus there could be simultaneous under-counting and over-counting.

For example, a working figure of 9,000 IDPs in Ogolo and Arinyapi was used by the DDMC, although the figure is more likely to be around 5,000 according to WFP. The DDMC's initial situational assessment on 11 January 2006 recorded 6,453 IDPs, but the numbers had quickly risen with the formation of camps and the return of IDPs from Moyo and Arua. Moreover, most of these people had been secondarily displaced, creating difficulties for record keeping in the district. Numbers of displaced at Itirikwa were not counted as it had not been formally visited by DDMC members at the time of the meeting, though it consisted of three villages.

While it was generally agreed that the most reliable figures were recorded by IOM/DASS, the sub-counties did not have the capacity to sustain the rigorous methodology required in maintaining such a database. One official admitted that for future updates, they simply reverted to the LC or camp leaders' lists, despite all the problems associated with them.<sup>83</sup> Reliable figures for the number of refugees who had been displaced by the conflict—as opposed to those moving due to socio-economic reasons—were not available, though one official estimated the number to be around 26,000,<sup>84</sup> while another gave a figure of 33,000, or about half the refugee population in Adjumani.<sup>85</sup>

It was also recognised that vulnerable populations could not be identified merely by definition—for example, 'displaced,' 'widowed,' 'orphans'—but by their capacity to sustain themselves.

---

<sup>81</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 24 January 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Ciforo, 26 January 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with local government official, Ofua, 30 January 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 27 January 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with UN official, Adjumani town, 26 January 2006.

Moreover, the identification of priorities among the population required careful consideration of available resources, as explained by a UN official:

Every intervention that we made is through needs assessment study. This does not mean that when they are displaced they need food, water and sanitation, health, shelter and other assistance. That is, food may not be number one. However, we determine the numbers of situation in terms of vulnerability, there are other people who stay with their relatives and others have nowhere to go to.<sup>86</sup>

Several IDPs disagreed; one claimed, “They don’t ask our opinion when bringing us something to help us in the camp.”<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the capacity to conduct these studies by local government was lacking and tended to be referred to NGOs or UN agencies, hindering the government’s ability to directly advocate for the IDPs and their hosts. Furthermore, the available assistance was limited to handouts of food or non-food items. Other projects to diversify livelihoods were not in place at the time of research.

#### **4.2 Problems with Distribution**

Many people noted the problems relating to the distribution of food or non-food items, even though most took place on a one-off basis. Even with the statistical complications noted above, some informants claimed that those not on the lists were later given rations from their friends, or else were able to get whatever was left over after the distributions were complete.<sup>88</sup> For example, one informant claimed, “The food which is brought—they give to the LC to give to us. He can cheat you; he can add to his people and reduce yours, so it is a problem for us. They are not monitoring the distribution.”<sup>89</sup> Accountability and procedural guidelines were found to be lacking, especially in the distributions done by OPM:

Usually, when foods are supplied by OPM, sometimes we don’t have [the] budget to give [wages] to the distributors, but because we don’t have [the] budget, sometimes portions of the food is given to distributors for their labour.<sup>90</sup>

One humanitarian worker noted other problems:

One time, the DPR [Disaster Preparedness and Refugees Ministry, OPM] tried to provide relief, but it was causing frustration and people said it was better not to provide food. The food was distributed by the district authorities and they got it, not the IDPs.<sup>91</sup>

According to the same source, the then Minister, Moses Ali, had found out about the problem and then resolved it. Furthermore, while the locals were seen to be assisting with the distributions targeting IDPs, they were not eligible for assistance even though they had given up land or accommodation for the IDPs:

---

<sup>86</sup> Interview with UN official, Adjumani town, 26 January 2006.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Dzaipi, 3 February 2006.

<sup>88</sup> For example, interview with internally displaced man, Pakele, 28 January 2006.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Ciforo, 26 January 2006.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with local government official, Ofua, 30 January 2006.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with humanitarian worker, Adjumani town, 1 February 2006.



There are problems, but these problems usually you detect them during times of food distribution. Some IDPs settle with relatives and for the relatives, they are left out and they say they are sharing their land, but why don't they get assistance? That is bringing problems to the extent that some are thinking of removing the land for IDPs. Usually we do not see this problem, but when there is distribution you see it.<sup>92</sup>

One respondent offered a solution:

In case any assistance is given to us, the assistance must also be given to the indigenous. Because the indigenous gave us pieces of land, and they also share the same buildings, same food—[the] children go into each others' houses.<sup>93</sup>

Indeed, this was the stance taken by LWF. Based on their experience of the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) and Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR), under which both locals and refugees are intended to benefit, many Adjumani residents believed a similar strategy should be employed in the district for IDPs and locals. One government official claimed that assistance was going to both groups,<sup>94</sup> but this was not necessarily the case for all affected populations. This had important implications for the district, as targeting specific groups may lead to disgruntlement or spontaneous movement towards areas of distributions. When asked about involvement with local development projects, one IDP leader remarked, "Groups are selected according to indigenous people, so we are not involved. They say IDPs may leave, and then the project will fail, so we are excluded."<sup>95</sup>

The household system of targeting distribution was also reported to be causing problems for different groups. Young adults who had not yet been married complained about the lack of recognition for them. One youth stated, "We youth, they don't want to register our names as [an] independent family, yet when there is voting, we also vote and we cannot get the same blanket for covering ourselves."<sup>96</sup> This system has the danger of encouraging early marriage when combined with other factors involving difficulties facing young IDPs. For instance, the use of child labour as a coping strategy by families suffering the hardships of displacement was seen to encourage girls to marry and leave their families at a young age:

[There is] no relationship between food and marriage, but just heavy work. Parents are fetching firewood and charcoal, [and when] they [girls] are coming back from school, they are told to sell it, buy things with the money without even eating. Therefore life is hard. Initially - in [their] homelands, they [girls] did not do such things since they had their own food. But here, she [the girl] must take more roles.<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, research also showed that 'female-headed' households are sometimes actually part of a polygamous family in which the individual wives register for food as single mothers, with

---

<sup>92</sup> Interview with local government official, Ofua, 30 January 2006.

<sup>93</sup> Quote by internally displaced man during focus group discussion, Adropi, 1 February 2006.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 25 January 2006.

<sup>95</sup> Quote by IDP leader during focus group discussion, 4 February 2006.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with internally displaced boy, Dzaipi, 24 January 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Quote by internally displaced man during focus group discussion, Adropi, 1 February 2006.

the husband being the main benefactor.<sup>98</sup> In this way, assistance directed at the household level may thus be seen as inadvertently encouraging polygamy.

### 4.3 Relief versus Development

Because of the complexity surrounding displacement issues in Adjumani, they require approaches that take into account both the host and the displaced communities. It also provides an opportunity to re-examine the concept of the so-called ‘relief-development continuum’<sup>99</sup> in the light of a protracted conflict with a variety of displacement patterns and strategies. It is now well-recognised that the gap between relief and development exists, in part because of their separation according to funding categories, but that a more integrated approach is needed so that IDPs will be better equipped for recovery.<sup>100</sup> Bearing in mind the criticisms of the development approach to certain emergency situations,<sup>101</sup> the authors view the situation in Adjumani district as an emergency situation requiring a development approach in order to assist both IDPs and host populations equitably. This is also in line with the National IDP Policy’s prescription that “United Nations agencies, *humanitarian and development agencies* and donors may be invited to render support in [these] area[s]” (emphasis added).<sup>102</sup> According to the district’s emergency plan:

Declaring a situation or problem an “emergency” is a call to action. In accordance with our mandate, we in the district of Adjumani define situations as emergencies in terms of the rights/well-being of children, women, elderly, and vulnerable communities. There should be no surprise that we may categorize situations as “emergencies” which others will not; and visa versa. The working definition of an “emergency” which under-pins this preparedness plan is: An emergency is a situation in which there is consensus that extraordinary action—beyond routine programmes and systems—is required to ensure the basic rights/survival and well-being of children, women, and elderly.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Interview with internally displaced woman, Dzaipi, 24 January 2006.

<sup>99</sup> The ‘relief-development continuum’ is a reference to the acknowledged gap between relief assistance (generally external emergency, life-saving assistance) and development assistance (generally longer-term and with an emphasis on grassroots motivation), and the efforts made to close this gap or effect a smoother transition between the two. There is a considerable amount of literature on this subject—though much of it refers to refugee situations, the theoretical aspect can be applicable to situations of internal displacement inasmuch as refugees and IDPs often face similar challenges. See for example, Jeff Crisp, “Mind the Gap! UNHCR, Humanitarian Assistance and the Development Process,” Paper presented at Centre for Migration Studies Conference ‘Commemorating UNHCR at 50: Past, Present and Future of Refugee Assistance,’ New York, 2000; Mark Bradbury, “Normalising the Crisis in Africa,” in *Disasters*, 22(4), 1998; Steven Holtzman, “Rethinking ‘Relief’ and ‘Development’ in Transition from Conflict,” *Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement Occasional Paper*, January 1999; Alexander Betts, “International Cooperation and the Targeting of Development Assistance for Refugee Solutions: Lessons from the 1980s,” in *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 107*, September 2004; Georg Frerks and Dorothea Hilhorst, “Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance in Emergency Situations,” in *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 56*, February 2002; and Karen Jacobsen, “The Forgotten Solution: Local Integration for Refugees in Developing Countries,” in *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 45*, July 2001.

<sup>100</sup> Holtzman, January 1999.

<sup>101</sup> Bradbury, 1998.

<sup>102</sup> National IDP Policy, section 3, *en passim* (e.g., 3.11.4 and 3.12.4). The policy requirements for each sector repeat the possibility for both humanitarian and development agencies to be involved.

<sup>103</sup> Adjumani District Local Government, *Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan*, 2004, p. 3.

This differs slightly from the definition of ‘Emergency’ in the National IDP Policy,<sup>104</sup> but remains the same in spirit. However, only the President of Uganda with the approval of Parliament is empowered by the Constitution to declare a state of emergency. Thus, while several respondents characterised the situation in the district as an ‘emergency,’ there was no legal basis for this declaration, even inasmuch as there were “serious and immediate threats to human life and well-being.”<sup>105</sup>

The way in which assistance is delivered to a displaced population can also affect the nature of recovery. Along this spectrum, the initial actions to mitigate the crises brought about by conflict in the district will necessarily be relief-based—providing emergency food and non-food items along with constructing boreholes and pit latrines in locations where people have moved as soon as possible. However, without adapting the social and economic structures used by IDPs prior to displacement, a situation of dependency can develop. At the same time, recognition must be made that the original situation prior to displacement is no longer applicable, and the high concentration of the population with limited land cannot support itself through subsistence agriculture alone. Thus, as recognised by the District Development Plan, other income-generating activities and access to micro-credit will be important,<sup>106</sup> though these are necessarily ‘developmental’ in orientation.

#### 4.4 “Dependency”

The issue of dependency was raised on numerous occasions by officials and humanitarian workers, who indicated it as a concern in trying to balance assistance and self-sufficiency among the IDP population. However, concerns about dependency are likely premature and oversimplified in light of the little—if any—assistance given to the IDPs and the various coping strategies they employ. The RLP’s research findings suggest that IDPs were attempting to influence the research agenda in the hope that humanitarian assistance, which until then consisted almost entirely of handouts, could be influenced in their favour. Indeed, the experience of many IDPs as refugees in southern Sudan, their close contact with Sudanese refugees in the district, and their observation of humanitarian activities elsewhere in northern Uganda may have been an important factor in their responses to assessment teams.<sup>107</sup>

However, the question of dependency should also be understood in light of the fact that the research period coincided with the dry season. Rains were expected in April, and thus food shortages were a distinct problem at almost all locations visited. Moreover, the conflict itself has strained normal coping mechanisms—hence the growing need for external assistance—making IDPs likely to try other livelihood strategies based on what they perceived as possible and

---

<sup>104</sup> The National IDP Policy’s glossary of terms states “Emergency is an extraordinary situation in which people are unable to meet their basic survival needs, or a situation that poses serious and immediate threats to human life and well-being.”

<sup>105</sup> The National IDP Policy, Glossary of Terms, “Emergency”, p. x.

<sup>106</sup> Adjumani District Local Government, *District Development Plan 2005-2008*, 2005.

<sup>107</sup> Georg Frerks and Dorothea Hilhorst, “Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance in Emergency Situations”, in *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 56*, February 2002, p. 14. Frerks and Hilhorst refer to “‘refugeeness’, i.e.: people that have experience in different camps because they were confronted with a range of “emergencies” allows the displaced population to become adept at ‘playing the victim’.”

available.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, the concern by the district that real dependency could develop, and that measures were needed to address this even at the initial stages of camp assistance in Ogolo and Arinyapi<sup>109</sup> must be seen as a positive sign:

How does he cultivate for himself? The idea is not to make them dependent. If you want to promote self-reliance, you must allow movement to cultivate. Maybe you must allow them to move maybe to the town council.<sup>110</sup>

On the other hand, although making work a condition for further assistance—as in the case of food for assets programmes—is largely accepted as a means of fighting dependency, this strategy has numerous problems, especially relating to IDPs’ rights to receive assistance when they are unable to support themselves. While it is a commendable programme that offers opportunities while creating needed social services, it must be carried out in such a way that does not infringe upon the right of IDPs to receive assistance when and where they need it. Some informants were also upset that locals had been selected for these programmes when it was the IDPs themselves who felt most in need of income generating activities.<sup>111</sup>

## 5 LIVELIHOODS

While IDPs in Adjumani were surviving largely without assistance, their ability to integrate with host communities was determined by availability of land (and other resources), as well as participation in economic activities. Those located near refugee settlements could also potentially enjoy better social services. Where land was relatively plentiful, for example in Opejo or Piyaru, the prospects for resettlement were good and it was in fact taking place. Where the soils were better irrigated, for example in Itirikwa, the agricultural potential was much higher and food assistance needs were not as great. Another motivating factor for displaced persons to move to certain locations was the availability of resources. IDP activities were overwhelmingly agrarian<sup>112</sup> due to their origins around the fringes of the district. In other words, very few were from urban areas which might have more diversified economic activities. Thus, natural resource pressure caused by the increased population density and movement away from relatively fertile areas like the Zoka forest belt was of concern.

### 5.1 Land Issues

Although large-scale displacement is a relatively new phenomenon in the district, there were already concerns that the land available for IDPs was insufficient, as well as unease about how long IDPs would live among other communities. As Adoko and Levine argued, “land will always

---

<sup>108</sup> Mark Bradbury points out that, “‘dependency’ of victims serves to obscure the fact that aid supplies are often manipulated by the politically powerful. It is no coincidence that those who define populations as dependent are the very people who control aid,” in “Normalising the Crisis in Africa”, in *Disasters*, 22(4), 1998, p. 333. However, as also noted by Bradbury, victims are not passive, and so IDPs themselves may similarly attempt to control assistance through the responses given to assessment teams.

<sup>109</sup> Adjumani DDMC meeting, 27 January 2006.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani town, 27 January 2006.

<sup>111</sup> Reported during a focus group discussion, Adropi, 1 February 2006.

<sup>112</sup> 83 percent of the economically active IDP population are engaged in agriculture, according to DASS/IOM, September 2005, p. 48.

be the subject of competing interests and, where the different legal systems give different rights, people will tend to choose to use the system which most favours their position.”<sup>113</sup> Thus the traditional land tenure systems and the official legal instruments relating to land require clarification.<sup>114</sup> Relating to this, there were reports of some hosts reclaiming their land and forcing the IDPs to look elsewhere:

But there are some [who are] borrowing a little land from relatives for cultivation, but after one year the relatives stop them. It happened in Kureku here. They said they do not have enough land so the IDPs must look for their own land.<sup>115</sup>

A local government official raised another set of problems:

Sometimes an IDP will plough something and it will be taken by the owner. Or they are only allowed to plant for one year, and after they are not allowed to plant. People tend to go back to their origins. The situation is tricky and when arbitration cannot help and when you look at the cases, there are so many. If you settle on land for over ten years, it becomes yours.<sup>116</sup> So the legalities are causing lots of problems on the ground. So we need a lot of sensitisation on these land issues.<sup>117</sup>

For those IDPs settled on government land, concern centred on the legality of their residence, as described above at Unna. However, according to DASS/IOM, 14 percent of the IDPs were still able to access their original lands regularly compared with five percent in other districts.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, the meaning of the term ‘access’ must be viewed in light of the security situation. For instance, it has been reported that UPDF detachments are likely to halt movement whenever there are rumours of rebel presence.

## 5.2 Natural Resource Pressure

A number of activities necessitated by displacement could create undue pressure on the environment. Large amounts of water are required for brick-making, while timber and grass for roofing are necessary during the construction of new camps. The burning of charcoal, both for self-consumption and for sale was cited as another environmental issue that had arisen in the course of displacement.<sup>119</sup> Clearing land for farming or residence, concentrated population densities, and the intensification of land use in agriculture were already a cause for concern

---

<sup>113</sup> Judy Adoko and Simon Levine, *Land Matters in Displacement: The Importance of Land Rights in Acholiland and What Threatens Them*, Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU) report commissioned by Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda, December 2004, p. 47.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-14 for a more in-depth discussion over the complications arising from the attempted streamlining of customary tenure and official mechanisms in the 1998 Land Act.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with local government official, Ofua, 30 January 2006.

<sup>116</sup> This is a misunderstanding of the *Land Act 1998*, as section 29 (2) stipulates *twelve* years, and section 31 (1) grants “tenant[s] by occupancy ... security of occupancy on the land” but does not grant ownership to the land. However, this would require owners (or government if the government was responsible for directing occupants where to settle) to negotiate with the occupants if they wished to reclaim the land. It should be noted that misperceptions of the law are just as possible sources of tension as the actual legalities.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with local government official, Pakele, 31 January 2006.

<sup>118</sup> DASS/IOM, September 2005, p. 38.

<sup>119</sup> Comment by humanitarian worker during RLP Debriefing to district stakeholders, 3 February 2006.

among government officials,<sup>120</sup> especially considering Adjumani's relatively drier climate compared with other parts of northern Uganda. As these activities are particularly important at the initial stages of displacement, the increased rate of fresh displacement since 2004 implies these negative environmental practices will increase.

If the situation proves too protracted, initial expectations by local hosts that IDPs would return to their original lands would quickly fade. As other studies have shown,<sup>121</sup> the initial expectations of the host population are important in determining the sustainability of their willingness to support displaced populations. Moreover, the evolution of attitudes from an initial welcome to gradual concern and then even outright resentment is a "widespread phenomenon" recognised in forced migration studies<sup>122</sup> and is generally the result of competition for scarce resources.

### 5.3 Other Economic Activities

According to the district plan, food production is already insufficient in Adjumani: "The average person in the rural areas does not generate enough income from the subsistence farming production to meet ones basic needs throughout the year."<sup>123</sup> In the course of displacement, aside from looted properties, many displaced persons were forced to abandon their possessions or sell them (particularly cattle)<sup>124</sup> in order to move to new locations and negotiate land elsewhere in the district. This therefore implies that assistance must be diversified into other areas such as income generating activities.<sup>125</sup> One humanitarian worker stated:

There used to be a food basket along the borders [with Gulu] that was fertile, but now they have been displaced. So now, what do you expect? Obviously famine. Now a lot of food is coming in convoys from Gulu.<sup>126</sup>

Other interviewees directly mentioned Pabbo camp in Gulu as the source of food for Adjumani, which raises crucial questions about the livelihood capacities across the two districts and should be an area for further investigation.

Currently, many IDPs reported that they engage in *leja-leja*, or 'casual labour,' an activity that has been labelled "exploitative."<sup>127</sup> For a day's work, which often consists of farming or building, each worker might expect to be paid a small bar of soap, some cooking oil or perhaps a cash wage between 500 and 1,000 Uganda Shillings, or roughly US\$ 0.25-0.50, depending on their ability to negotiate their pay and the amount of land to be worked.<sup>128</sup> Overall, as *leja-leja*

---

<sup>120</sup> Adjumani DDMC Meeting, 27 January 2006.

<sup>121</sup> Karen Jacobsen, "The Forgotten Solution: Local Integration for Refugees in Developing Countries," in *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 45*, July 2001, p. 20.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, p.19.

<sup>123</sup> Adjumani District Local Government, *District Development Plan 2005-2008*, 2005, p. 16.

<sup>124</sup> For example, this issue was raised in an interview with a local councillor, Pakele, 28 January 2006.

<sup>125</sup> UNHCR has recommended income-generating activities in its mid-term review with regard to refugee settlements. UNHCR, *Self-Reliance Strategy (1999-2003) for Refugee Hosting Areas in Moyo, Arua and Adjumani Districts, Uganda: Report of the Mid-Term Review*, RLSS Mission Report 2004/03, April 2004.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with two humanitarian workers, Adjumani town, 2 February 2006.

<sup>127</sup> Jeff Crisp, "No Solutions in Sight: The Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa," *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 75*, January 2003, p. 20.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Pakele, 28 January 2006.

primarily requires unskilled labour, the increased concentration of IDPs in any given area will lead to greater competition for scarce work. Additionally, unemployment rates in Adjumani are already reported at the very high level of 41 percent,<sup>129</sup> and additional IDPs competing for *leja-leja* would no doubt exacerbate the problem. This is compounded by the relatively large demographic gap of men aged between 20 and 30 years,<sup>130</sup> which further increases the dependency ratio. One police officer noted that young men engaged in *leja-leja* with women employers have faced non-payment or even sexual abuse in the course of their work.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, many people, including the elderly and those with disabilities, are unable to take part in this activity at all. One woman pointed out that, “The old and disabled groups are more affected because they cannot go searching for casual labour that needs energy yet this is the main income here in the IDP camp.”<sup>132</sup> Growing restrictions on movement because of encampment could also potentially jeopardise this type of income production.

Thus while self-settlement among IDPs can prove to be viable, the agricultural and economic potential within the district is still too limited for complete self-reliance. Strategies must therefore be employed to support the host areas as much as direct assistance to the IDPs themselves.

## 6 DURABLE SOLUTIONS

As noted elsewhere in this report, most camps in Adjumani were recently created or recognised following a protracted period during which the Adjumani District Council had opposed the idea of encampment. At the moment, discussions about durable solutions are therefore theoretical and not centred on ending displacement but rather on how long displacement will continue. Interviews showed that lasting solutions are inextricably linked to ending the LRA insurgency, since any interventions while people are still confined in camps or are in locations away from their homes can only be palliative.<sup>133</sup> This is further complicated by the local government policy which envisions a tentative one-year plan for encampment, after which people should be dispersed to their homes. However, this policy was designed under the erroneous assumption that the root cause of displacement would cease after one year or indeed that even then it would be safe for IDPs to return to their homes. In practice, a one year plan for return is likely to infringe upon the rights of IDPs to independently and voluntarily determine the conditions for their return. This was visible in the January 2006 DDMC meeting in Adjumani, in which discussions focused on attaching conditions to the distribution of humanitarian assistance to IDPs.<sup>134</sup>

Furthermore, Adjumani presents multiple scenarios of displacement which challenge some of the assumptions of the Guiding Principles and which cannot be limited to a single solution of return, resettlement, or reintegration. Unlike the 1951 Refugee Convention, which stipulates clear standards for determining when refugee status comes to an end,<sup>135</sup> no such guidelines exist in

---

<sup>129</sup> DASS/IOM, September 2005, p. 48.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, p. 41.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with police officer, Adjumani town, 29 January 2006.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with internally displaced woman, Ciforo, 26 January 2006.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with local government official, Adjumani District Headquarters, 24 January 2006.

<sup>134</sup> Minutes of DDMC Meeting in Adjumani, 27 January 2006

<sup>135</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Convention*, July 1951, Articles 1c(5) & (6).

influential documents such as the National IDP Policy, the Guiding Principles, or the Internally Displaced Persons Compilation and Analysis of Legal Norms in terms of determining the end of displacement. This is due in part to the fact that IDPs in certain areas of Adjumani—for instance in Biyaya in Adjumani town council—continue to identify themselves as such, even when under other circumstances they might be considered resettled.<sup>136</sup> For this reason, and because in Adjumani most IDPs are settled among their kinfolds—a situation that does not appear to have been envisaged in the drafting process—it is not quite clear how durable solutions would apply.

## 6.1 Return

Despite disagreement over how durable solutions are to apply in Adjumani, some IDPs have already started to return. However, unlike in Lira, where people are returning to their original land, IDPs in Adjumani are moving from one situation of displacement to another, creating a phenomenon of secondary displacement. For example, displaced persons who had previously fled Adjumani to Moyo and Arua are beginning to return, but they are returning to the newly created camps in Ogolo and Arinyapi, which are closer to their original lands. In the words of one UN official: “People are returning from Arua to Ogolo... also from Elegwu parish.”<sup>137</sup> Besides, although some IDPs had made prior attempts at returning to their homes, the unpredictability of the security situation implied that they were continuously being re-displaced. Thus one IDP interviewed in Adropi said,

[Return] is not yet planned. Because the land here is limited, they are going back and cultivating land, even building houses also. In 2003, there are some who migrated there [back to their homes], but rebels started disturbing them and so they came back. Because to stay like that [there] is no food—but they used to get their own food, so they went back. But the rebels were disturbing them, so they came back.<sup>138</sup>

Clearly, despite the local government plan to return IDPs at the end of the year, the right conditions must be there. Indeed, if any return is to take place, IDPs’ perceptions should be respected, and above all it should take place in dignity, and without constraints. Moreover, in areas of return, appropriate conditions and infrastructure should first be established before people can go back. This view was expressed by a local government official who said:

Definitely because of the insecurity in some places, there is no safe water or health facilities. When they go back, they will not have these facilities. They will go because they don’t have land. But as I say, the problem of safe water, health facilities, schools—the government has been building roads everywhere but when they go back those things will be a problem.<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> Most IDPs in Biyaya were displaced from Moyo and have stayed in this area for up to seven years.

<sup>137</sup> Minutes of DDMC Meeting in Adjumani, 27 January 2006. He claimed about 600 people were involved in this movement.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with internally displaced man, Adropi, 1 February 2006.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with local government official, Ofua, 30 January 2006.



## 7 CONCLUSION

The low visibility and the variety of settlement strategies employed by IDPs in Adjumani has created a unique challenge for the government and humanitarian agencies in the district. However, because this choice of not creating camps was a conscious one taken by the government in the past, they must also take full responsibility for meeting the needs of these people. Although the National IDP Policy is a progressive step, an actual law relating to disaster preparedness enacted by Parliament is needed to fully protect the rights of IDPs.

While numerous challenges to protecting Adjumani's IDPs have existed for some time now, the future protection needs are likely to be determined by the outcome of the Juba peace process. Should this prove unsuccessful, then support to internally displaced persons and their host communities may, in the long term, be less costly than creating camps and delivering monthly food rations. Moreover, such a strategy would be less likely to create dependency. On the other hand, should the talks result in a comprehensive peace accord with the LRA, then there will be a need for return, reintegration and recovery programmes to address the needs of Adjumani's IDPs as well.

More broadly, as was once written by Francis Deng, the former Representative of the UN Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons, "the question 'who are the internally displaced' cannot be separated from the question 'who are those in need of protection'."<sup>140</sup> Thus, detailed assessments of the needs of the variety of displaced populations as well as strategies to work with these populations continue to be needed. Adjumani District, in its work with the Self-Reliance Strategy and Development Assistance for Refugees, as well as the experiences of the other districts that have had displaced populations for a much longer period of time, offer some important lessons.

---

<sup>140</sup> F.M. Deng, "The International Protection of the Internally Displaced", *International Journal of Refugee Law Special Issue*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 79.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Adjumani District Disaster Management Committee, *Situational Assessment Report for Dzaipi Sub-County after LRA Attacks on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2006*, Adjumani: Adjumani DDMC, January 2006.

Adjumani District Local Government, *District Development Plan 2005-2008*, Adjumani: Adjumani District Local Government, 2005.

Adjumani District Local Government, *Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan*, Adjumani: Adjumani District Local Government, 2004.

Adoko, Judy and Simon Levine, *Land Matters in Displacement: The Importance of Land Rights in Acholiland and What Threatens Them*, Kampala: Land and Equity Movement in Uganda report commissioned by CSOPNU, December 2004.

Allen, Tim, "A Flight from Refuge: The Return of Refugees from Southern Sudan to Northwest Uganda in the Late 1980s", in Allen, Tim (ed.), *In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight and Homecoming in Northeast Africa*, London: James Currey, 1996.

Betts, Alexander, "International Cooperation and the Targeting of Development Assistance for Refugee Solutions: Lessons from the 1980s", *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 107*, September 2004.

Bøås, Morten and Anne Hatløy, *Northern Uganda Internally Displaced Persons Profiling Study*, Kampala: FAFO report commissioned by OPM, September 2005.

Bradbury, Mark, "Normalising the Crisis in Africa", in *Disasters*, 22(4), 1998.

Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda, *Nowhere to Hide: Humanitarian Protection Threats in Northern Uganda*, Kampala: CSOPNU, December 2004.

Crisp, Jeff, "Mind the Gap! UNHCR, Humanitarian Assistance and the Development Process", New York: Paper presented at Centre for Migration Studies Conference 'Commemorating UNHCR at 50: Past, Present and Future of Refugee Assistance', 2000.

Crisp, Jeff, "No Solutions in Sight: The Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa", *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 75*, January 2003.

Danish Assistance to the Self-Reliance Strategy/International Organization for Migration, *Registration of IDP Population in Adjumani District, Uganda: IDP Population Profile and Detailed Statistics*, Kampala: DASS/IOM, September 2005.

Deng, Francis M., *Internally Displaced Persons Compilation and Analysis of Legal Norms*, New York & Geneva: UN OHCHR, 1998.

Deng, Francis M., "The International Protection of the Internally Displaced", *International Journal of Refugee Law Special Issue*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Dzaipi Sub-County Local Government/Council, *Security Meeting Held in Dzaipi Sub-County on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2005*, Dzaipi: Dzaipi Local Government, March 2005.

Frerks, Georg and Dorothea Hilhorst, "Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance in Emergency Situations", in *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 56*, February 2002.

Gersony, Robert, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda*, Kampala: USAID, August 1997.

Government of Uganda, *The Land (Amendment) Act*, Kampala: Republic of Uganda: 2004.

Holtzman, Steven, "Rethinking 'Relief' and 'Development' in Transition from Conflict", *Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement Occasional Paper*, January 1999.

Hovil, Lucy, *Refugees and the Security Situation in Adjumani District*, Refugee Law Project Working Paper No. 2, June 2001.

Hovil, Lucy and Joanna R. Quinn, *Peace First, Justice Later: Traditional Justice in Northern Uganda*, Refugee Law Project Working Paper No. 17, July 2005.

Hovil, Lucy and Moses Chrispus Okello, "Only Peace Can Restore the Confidence of the Displaced", Kampala: Refugee Law Project report commissioned by the Norwegian Refugee Council/Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, March 2006.

Human Rights Watch, *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, Kampala: Human Rights Watch September 2005.

Jacobsen, Karen, "The Forgotten Solution: Local Integration for Refugees in Developing Countries", in *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 45*, July 2001.

Joint Monitoring Committee, *Emergency Plan for Humanitarian Interventions for the North*, Kampala: Office of the Prime Minister in Liaison with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 2006.

Lomo, Zachary & Lucy Hovil, *Behind the Violence: Causes, Consequences and the Search for Solutions to the War in Northern Uganda*, Refugee Law Project Working Paper No. 11, February 2004.

Lomo, Zachary & Lucy Hovil, *Negotiating Peace: Resolution of Conflicts in Uganda's West Nile Region*, Refugee Law Project Working Paper No. 12, June 2004.

Norwegian Refugee Council/Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Uganda: Relief Efforts Hampered in One of the World's Worst Internal Displacement Crises*, Kampala & Geneva: NRC/IDMC, December 2005.

Refugee Law Project, *Briefing Paper on Displacement in Adjumani*, forthcoming.

Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, Oxford: Oxford Publishing, 2004, [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org).

Office of the Prime Minister, Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, *The National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons*, Kampala: Republic of Uganda, August 2004.

UNHCR, *Self-Reliance Strategy (1999-2003) for Refugee Hosting Areas in Moyo, Arua and Adjumani Districts, Uganda: Report of the Mid-Term Review*, Kampala: RLSS Mission Report 2004/03, April 2004.

UNHCR, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, July 1951.

UN OCHA, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, Geneva & New York: United Nations, 1998.