

Briefing Note – 28 June 2017

UGANDA

Influx of South Sudanese refugees straining resources



	Not required	Low	Moderate	Significant	Major
Need for international assistance			X		
Expected impact	Very low	Low	Moderate	Significant	Major

Crisis overview

2017 has seen a significant spike in South Sudanese refugees entering Uganda: as of 7 June the total number of south Sudanese refugees in Uganda is over 955,000. Most are in West Nile district in the northern region of Kenya, although some are now being settled in Lamwo district. These refugees are reliant on humanitarian assistance for survival, and response is stretched by limited funding and the high continuous arrival rate. Priority sectors for assistance are food and livelihoods, WASH, and health. Nutrition, protection, education, and shelter needs are also high.

Key findings

Anticipated scope and scale

Ongoing conflict in South Sudan has displaced nearly two million people as of 7 June, with 955,000 refugees entering Uganda since the beginning of the crisis - 280,000 in 2017 alone. The conflict is ongoing in South Sudan and seasonally escalates following the rainy season in July. The current rate of refugees entering Uganda is straining coping capacity across all sectors and this can be expected to continue. Host communities are also affected by the influx, as Uganda's refugee policy means that refugees settle among them and resources are strained.

Key priorities

Food: Food availability and access is already strained, with cuts to South Sudanese refugee rations in May. An increasing influx of refugees will impact food security in refugee camps and will limit livelihoods and self-reliance of refugees.

WASH: Water access is a key issue, with water trucking providing water for most South Sudanese refugees. Overcrowding means infrastructure is inadequate for the large refugee population.

Health: Services are strained, and with poor infrastructure coverage, there is a high risk of disease outbreaks.

Humanitarian constraints

Humanitarian response funding is low, limiting response capabilities. Security incidents can affect delivery of aid, although they are infrequent.

Limitations

Limited detailed information on sectoral needs, specifically that of food security and health within the refugee's camps.

Crisis impact

The predominant driver of current displacement from South Sudan to Uganda is the ongoing conflict between armed groups and government forces in South Sudan (OCHA 31/03/2017; UNHCR 01/05/2017). Refugee numbers in Uganda has had two spikes: the first in 2014 with an increase to over 150,000 refugees. The second spike occurred in 2016, when the number of refugees more than doubled from 2015, to reach over 660,000. As of 7 June 2017, the total number of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda is over 955,000, with almost 300,000 having arrived in 2017 (UNHCR 07/06/2017).

South Sudanese refugees represent over 70% of all refugees in Uganda (over 1.25 million), and are predominantly located in the northwest West Nile region. Refugees are hosted primarily in Yumbe (272,000), Moyo (160,000), Arua (174,000), Adjumani (224,000), Lamwo (7,000) located in northern region of Uganda and Kiryandongo (51,000) in the central region (UNHCR 01/05/2017).

Food and livelihoods

Food insecurity remains high for South Sudanese refugees, with an estimated one million projected to require food assistance by the end of 2017. If increased food assistance is not received, this population is likely to be in IPC Phase 3 food security levels (UNHCR 15/05/2017; FEWSNET 05/2017).

Refugees rely on food assistance until they are able to provide for themselves using land provided by the Ugandan government. Full rations are received for three years, after which half rations are received for a further two years. However, funding shortages, as well as the continued high rate of refugee arrivals, has resulted in people arriving prior to 2015 receiving half rations since August 2016 and the further reduction of food rations by the WFP in May (Amnesty International 05/06/2017).

Less than half of the refugee population in settlements in West Nile have access to land for farming. The government has also reduced land allocations to refugees to farm due to high rates of arrivals: from 100m x 100m plots to 30m x 30m plots. The size of the farming plots provided by Uganda in West Nile, where most South Sudanese refugees are, were already smaller than in other regions in Uganda (The Guardian 21/05/2017).

Regular interruptions of food supplies are reported in West Nile, especially in May as there were logistical difficulties and food shortages earlier in the year. Many refugees reported receiving incomplete food baskets (Amnesty International 05/06/2017; Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017).

Many of the settlements are remote making access to markets difficult when refugees can produce crops (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017). Prices of food in these

settlements have been driven up due to increased demand and food shortages among the refugee population (The Guardian 21/05/2017).

WASH

WASH needs are high as there is a lack of sustainable water systems and WASH infrastructure. Water trucking represents 35% of the total water supplied to refugees in Uganda, but in West Nile it is 61% (Amnesty International 05/06/2017). Poor WASH facilities have been reported across West Nile, with access to latrines in Bidibidi settlement at 1 per 25 people, below recommended Sphere standards of 1 per 20 people (UNHCR 15/05/2017).

Health

Prevention of cholera outbreaks remains a priority following the 2016 outbreak. Although there are currently no cholera cases in Uganda, there has been a resurgence of cholera across South Sudan this year, therefore transmission into the refugee populations is possible (UNHCR 15/04/2017). Communicable disease prevention and control is difficult given limited capacity and infrastructure (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017). There is a lack of health facilities and in areas with high arrivals life-saving drugs and essential medical supplies have been in short supply. Stocks of anti-malarial medicines for children have repeatedly been depleted (UNHCR 15/05/2017).

The health workforce is overstretched, affecting delivery of health services. 43% of health services are operating from temporary structures and ambulances are old and inadequate (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017).

Psycho-social support is also noted as a critical protection need. Most refugees are witness to or are victims of varying forms of violence, and therefore have a need for psycho-social support on arrival in Uganda (UNHCR 15/05/2017). Suicides have been reported among South Sudanese refugees shortly after their arrival (Amnesty International 05/06/2017; Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017).

Nutrition

Nutrition across all camps is poor, with average Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) levels at 9.4%, close to Serious levels. GAM levels of over 14%, close to Critical levels, have been reported in Rhino and Arua settlements in West Nile.

Protection

Protection needs are high for all South Sudanese refugees, especially for SGBV and child protection, as the demographic is 86% female and 64% children. High rates of unaccompanied and separated children are arriving from South Sudan (Amnesty International 05/06/2017).

Education

Education needs are high for all camps as 64% of the population are children. Overcrowding is an issue for children of all ages, and ratios for schools have been reported as high as 200 students per teacher, and the average ratio for senior classes is 100:1 (UNHCR 15/05/2017). A lack of teachers have been reported, as well as a lack of teaching and learning materials (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017). There is a high absenteeism of teachers due to a lack of accommodation and irregular salary payments. Student absenteeism is also prevalent due to food shortages and overcrowding (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017).

Shelter

Overcrowding is reported in transit centres. In July 2016 close to 20,000 refugees were staying at Nyumanzi Transit Centre, which has a capacity of 2,000 people (UNHCR 27/07/2016).

Shelter kits provided to refugees are basic and require refugees to collect additional materials. Many refugees have to pay for assistance to construct the shelter and the roof (Amnesty International 05/06/2017).

Female-headed households, unaccompanied children, the elderly, and disabled have special needs but there is a lack of appropriate shelters constructed for this population 50 shelters were constructed for people with special needs in Rhino camp where there are 50,000 South Sudanese refugees. (Amnesty International 05/06/2017).

Vulnerable groups affected

The high proportion of women and children that makes up the refugees population make a significant number of individuals more vulnerable to child protection issues and SGBV (UNHCR 15/05/2017). In Bidibidi camp, an average of more than 5 SGBV incidents are reported weekly (UNHCR 10/04/2017; UNHCR 27/03/2017; UNHCR 13/03/2017).

Aggravating factors

Insecurity

Attacks from the SPLA in South Sudan have been reported in June, when 18 refugees in West Nile were abducted and livestock stolen. However, these incidents remain sporadic (All Africa 20/06/2017).

Poverty

Host communities suffered from high rates of poverty before the recent influx of refugees (Development Initiatives accessed 25/06/2017).

Contextual information

Drivers of the current displacement:

South Sudan conflict

The South Sudanese government made the unilateral decision to restructure the country from 10 to 28 states in late 2015. On 14 January 2017, the president created more new states. Reports suggested between four and eight new states were created. This enables the government to strengthen its control over oil resources, notably in Upper Nile. However, this was perceived by the opposition as a violation of the 2015 peace agreement. Violence erupted as the result of border demarcations disagreements in parts of Upper Nile, Jonglei, Western Bahr el Ghazal and Central and Eastern Equatoria. (Sudan Tribune, 16/01/2017; Small Arms Survey, 23/02/2017)

Violence between government and opposition forces escalated in Upper Nile, Jonglei, and is regularly reported across the Equatorias in January and April between government forces and the opposition, as well as smaller-scale conflicts between local armed rivals in Greater Equatoria, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and Unity. (UNCHR, 15/05/2017; ICG, 20/12/2017). Throughout May the conflict has been ongoing throughout Upper Nile, Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Western Equatoria, and Unity. (Sudan Tribune, 05/05/2017; Radio Tamazuj, 26/05/2017; Radio Tamazuj, 21/05/2017; UNMISS, 04/05/2017; Sudan Tribune, 20/05/2017)

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

The government of Uganda has had a longstanding refugee strategy of self-reliance, allowing freedom of movement, the right to work, the right to documentation, access to

social services, and allocation of plots of land for shelter and agricultural production. The government pursues a non-camp policy and provides plots of land for refugee households arranged around agricultural land. To help social cohesion between host communities and refugees, 30% of the government's funding that goes to refugees is aimed at directly benefiting host communities (UNHCR 15/05/2017; The Guardian 03/04/2017).

While recent drought has contributed to food insecurity across the country, average harvests are predicted from June, and should allow the government more capacity to assist refugees.

Despite widespread acclaim for Uganda's progressive policy towards refugees, some criticism exists over the actual freedom of movement of refugees, the limited work available, and access to land that may be unsuitable for farming and may be reclaimed at any time by the government (News Deeply 30/05/2017). Living outside of camps is sometimes seen as more favourable than in camps due to insufficient services and opportunities in camps (The Guardian 21/05/2017).

Preliminary results from a UNDP survey suggest the government of Uganda contributes over USD 322 million per year to the protection and management of refugees, and the provision of essential services. The government has also taken a loan of USD 50 million from the World Bank for investment in refugee hosting areas (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017).

International response capacity

A number of UN organisations and NGOs are responding to the situation in partnership with the Ugandan Government. They have established a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which forms over-arching policy and strategy coordination guiding all aspects of the refugee response from food security to WASH to health (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017). The CRRF is co-led and coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR. Country level and district level inter-agency coordination meetings happen on a weekly basis. (UNHCR 15/05/2017).

However, international response is limited by the major funding deficit across all sectors. Of the requested funding to support the response, only 18% has been received, with a gap of over USD 550 Million as of 15 May (OCHA 15/05/2017). However, a summit on the Ugandan refugee model in Kampala from 22 -23 June has resulted in pledges of more than USD 300 million (ECHO 22/06/2017).

Limited funding has seen some needs, such as psycho-social treatment ignored, as focus is on food security, health, and WASH (Amnesty International 05/06/2017).

In order to fund the construction of more sustainable water sources, water provision for all new settlements is planned to reach SPHERE emergency standards of 10L of water per person per day. This will free funds to construct sustainable water sources (UNHCR 15/05/2017).

Outlook

The continued arrival of South Sudanese refugees coupled with funding constraints has stretched capacity of resources in Uganda and is the main cause of the high multi-sectoral needs of refugees. The government and UNHCR predict that 1,025,000 South Sudanese refugees will be in Uganda by the end of 2017, although this figure seems low as high arrival rates continued in 2017 so far (Government of Uganda and UNHCR 06/06/2017). Various agencies have warned of the consequences of the lack of funding on response. One concern is the peaceful co-existence of refugees and host communities, which may become strained as promised infrastructure such as schools and health facilities has not been realised (The Guardian 21/05/2017). Other concerns are sectoral: such as the increasing food insecurity, the potential for disease outbreaks due to poor WASH and health facilities, and the lack of available land for refugees (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017).

Despite reports of landowners resisting the relocation of refugees, and a convoy ambush by members of a host community, reports on increasing hostility between host communities and refugees remain limited (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017). Self-reliance and co-existence as a response to refugee influx is not new in West Nile, where large-scale displacement is common both to and from Uganda since the 1960s. Similar concerns over resource allocation and tensions between host communities and refugees have been raised during such moments (Bagenda; A. Naggaga; E. Smith, 2003; Kaiser 2006).

However, the common identity and language of South Sudanese refugees and the host communities in West Nile, the fact that many Ugandans in West Nile were displaced into areas in South Sudan, and the continuing existence of refugees in the area for decades has meant that the consequences of any previous influxes have not resulted in lasting tensions (Kaiser 2006; Financial Times 07/06/2017). If continuous arrivals lead to the establishment of camps further away from West Nile, there may be a risk of clashes between the host community and the refugees. While tensions around limited resources should remain as the scale of the current South Sudanese displacement is unprecedented, impact will likely be largely on sectoral needs, especially food security, WASH, and health rather than insecurity. Without an investment in sustainability, high needs are likely to continue for this population for years to come. One result may be the suspension of the self-reliance strategy as the Director of Refugee Affairs has stated that they are exploring options beyond providing households with plots of land (Government of Uganda and UN 20/06/2017).

Coping mechanisms

As food rations are often the only support refugees receive, food is often sold to buy NFIs and pay for transport, even in situations when food rations have been cut (Amnesty International 05/06/2017).

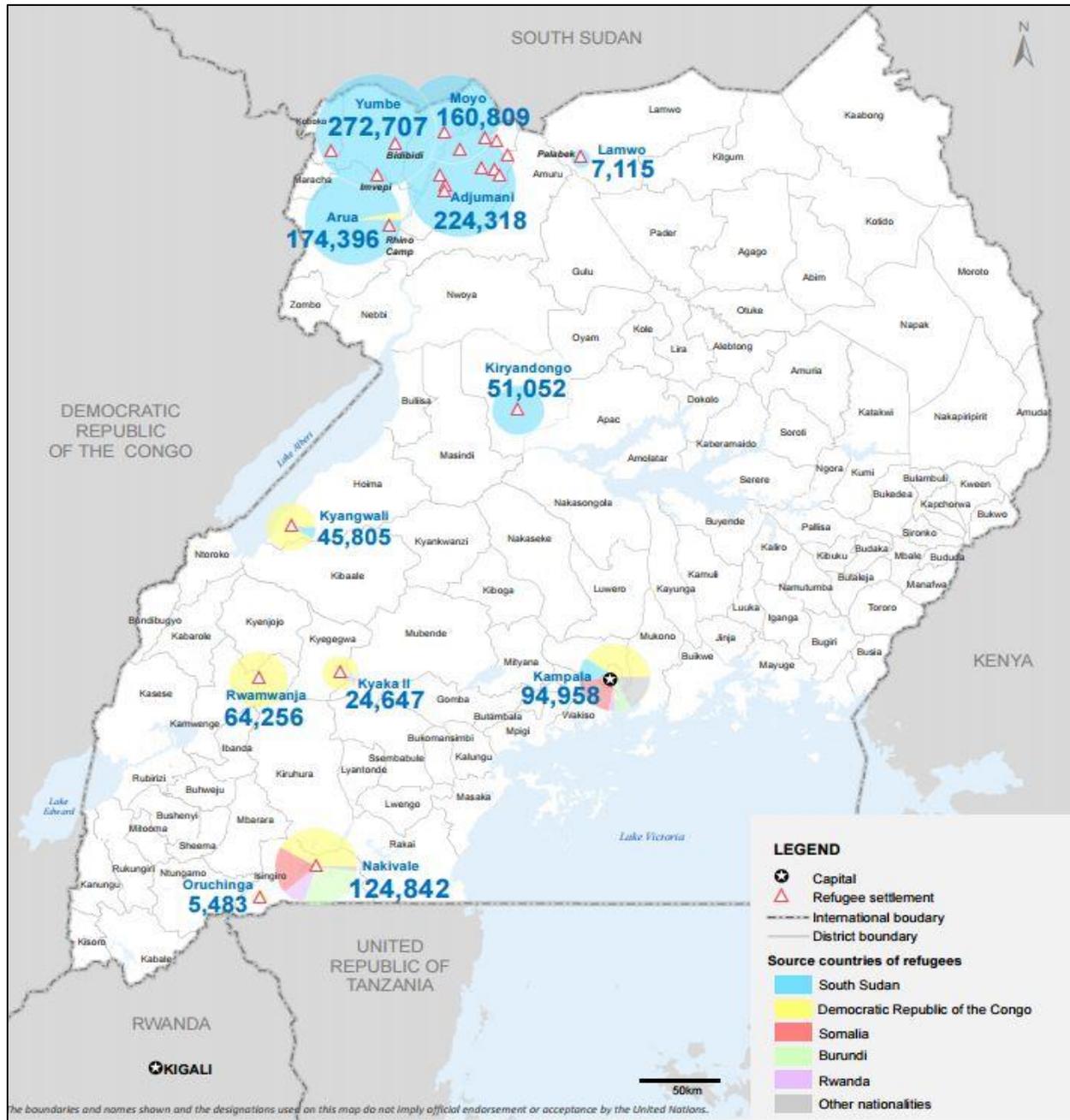
Information gaps and needs

- Health needs of the population, including information on diseases.
- Information is aggregated, and a breakdown of specific needs by camps and for specific populations is missing.
- Information regarding food security within camps is lacking as well as information around food access.
- Identification of needs such as health and protection is delayed due to the high arrival rate creating difficulties in registration (UNHCR 15/05/2017).

Lessons learned

- Accessing livelihoods is an essential need - agricultural interventions provide food security and increased peaceful co-existence amongst refugees and host community members (UNHCR 15/05/2017).
- The development of child friendly spaces for psychosocial and life skills services and selection and strengthening of community structures of protection can facilitate the effectiveness of the referral pathways for vulnerable children including Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UNHCR 15/05/2017).
- Bio-metric registration is essential for effectively managing the needs of refugees (UNHCR 15/05/2017).
- Sustainability and permanent infrastructure is vital, especially for WASH (Amnesty International 05/06/2017).

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Uganda as of 1 May, 2017



Source: UNHCR 01/05/2017