

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
57th MEETING**

16-17 June 2004

Room XII

Palais des Nations, Geneva

**Northern Uganda: Follow-Up Actions to the Action Points/55th IASC
WG meeting-Update as of June 2004**

Circulated: 8 June 2004

Encouraged the Country Team to pursue dialogue with the Government and LRA to gain greater humanitarian access and exploring a range of avenues such as through the Sudan Peace process, and also targeting key donors to use their influence. UNCT/HC

- The UN HC, working closely with the UNCT continues, through his membership to the Donor Group for the North, Amnesty and Recovery from Conflict (DG NARC) to persuade the Government on the necessity to engage in the peaceful resolution to the conflict in the north. In addition, discrete discussions continue with major ambassadors whose countries have initiatives in this area.
- The UN HC and the UNCT also engages Government on a regular basis on the need for a peaceful solution to the conflict, CSOs active in this area, and individuals such as Ms. Bigombe.
- A UN Humanitarian Access Advisor (reporting to the UN HC) based in Gulu is working with the ARLPI, the cultural leaders and some Acholi Parliamentarians to build confidence with the LRA. As a follow-up action, on 28 April, the HC met Archbishop Odama, Chair of the ARLPI where he offered the UN assistance for facilitation of the traditional and religious leaders efforts to promote peace through intra community dialogue first among Acholi themselves, between Acholi and Langi and other groups in the North, and with other regions of Uganda. This process would contribute a lot to forgiveness and facilitate the return of rebels in their community of origin and other areas of Uganda. Follow-up actions are being developed-more could be done with additional resources.
- On 28 April, the UNCT met with an AU delegation. The HC invited the AU to work with the UN on the humanitarian diplomacy by helping the mediator (be the religious/cultural leaders) through concrete advise and coaching, increase the level of comfort and build confidence between the GoU and the LRA as well as reinforce the collaboration and confidence between Sudan and Uganda for a peaceful solution to the conflict. The Head of the AU delegation proposed to encourage the Government to pursue peaceful means to end the conflict. The AU was concerned that the numerous “peace initiatives” could be misleading and was of the opinion that the AU could play a catalytic role to crystallize initiatives into a unique channel. The AU also agreed to look into the regional dimension of the conflict, by promoting confidence and acting as the communication channel between Sudan and Uganda.
- On the issue of confidence building between both sides to the conflict, the HC encouraged ICRC to resume fully their activities as they represent an important partner for humanitarian diplomacy and in helping broker peace. He highlighted the already important role played by the ICRC family.
- The UNCT is following with interest the announcement of the numerous defections of LRA rebels over the past month in Acholi districts. The President recently expressed readiness for peace talks with the LRA; although we are yet to see a confirmed positive reaction of the LRA, this readiness and the defections or surrendering seen over the past weeks bring hope that both parties to the conflict might come to a negotiation table for a long waited

discussion, through the assistance of neutral or external mediators and observers. The UNCT, in light of those developments, is starting to work on contingency planning (food and non food items and protection) in case of a major defection of LRA rebels or an agreement by LRA as a whole to a peaceful solution. The UNCT is also following the development of the Sudan Peace process since this is intrinsically linked to the situation in Northern Uganda and has decided to work closely and to compare notes with the Sudan country team. It is inviting the office of the RC/HC in Sudan to make a presentation to the Heads of Agencies in Kampala.

Encourage the Country Team to review the use of armed escorts to deliver humanitarian assistance in accordance with the IASC guidelines on the use of armed escorts. UNCT/HC

As mentioned in the February brief, the restricted access to the IDP population in the camps is obviously limiting the level of assistance. The UN operations in Uganda using military escorts in specific districts are along the IASC guidelines on the use of military or armed escorts for humanitarian convoys. Considering the current security situation, with an increase in attacks of camps in Gulu and Kitgum districts and on refugee settlements in Adjumani district, the use of military escorts is appropriate for UN convoys. UNICEF is expecting two armoured vehicles for which light military escort has been required from the Government.

Encouraged the Country Team to work with donors to advocate for the adoption and implementation of the National IDP Strategy. UNCT/HC

The only pending hurdle to the adoption of the National Policy on IDPs by Cabinet of Ministers is now addressed by the Minister of Finance. As a consequence, Government announced in a public meeting and in response to a question by the HC, that the IDP Policy is approved. The formal endorsement of the policy will take place in the next Cabinet meeting.

Requested agencies, IDP Unit and ERC to support revitalisation of the Protection Working Group in Kampala, while noting that the protection issues entailed broad group of vulnerable population and not just IDPs. OCHA Uganda

- A monthly Protection Working Group meets regularly in Kampala, in Kitgum and Gulu from where the information on protection issues is initiated. Findings and actions of those two groups are fed into the Kampala meeting. The attendance is still irregular but is slowly becoming more structured at the field level with the participation of the Uganda Human Rights Commission in Gulu and other human rights NGOs.
- UNICEF has substantially increased its child protection function in the conflict affected districts and in Kampala: the head of the Child Protection Section in Kampala took his function 2 months ago, a Child Protection Officer, based in Gulu, is working over Gulu and Kitgum; a second Child Protection officer is under recruitment for Kitgum; a consultant on child protection has been operating in the Teso region since September 2003; recruitment for another temporary child protection officer and two UN Volunteers on child protection is under way.
- A 'Protection of Civilians' workshop is planned by the PDSB OCHA NY at the end of June to address key concerns of humanitarian access and security (developing improved mechanisms, general agreement on the principles concerning the way in which humanitarian assistance is provided; appropriate and effective security for convoys in compliance with international guidance; establishing the rules and relationship between the military and humanitarian agencies, etc) and developing joint strategies to deal with key protection issues in northern Uganda (such as protection of camps; sexual violence and abuse; the 'night commuters' phenomenon; the specific needs of female and child-headed households; DDRR; improving the humanitarian response to HIV/AIDS; etc). Participants should include senior representatives of concerned government ministries and departments (President's office, Internal Affairs, Defence, Local Government, Justice, Social Welfare), their UN country team counterparts, key international donors and NGOs at the country director level and at working level.

- In April 2004, the HC invited the Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, to look into the possibility of his office establishing a presence in Uganda as recommended by the IDP Unit mission in March. A working group headed by OCHA had been set-up to look into more details, with other UN agencies and donors, on OHCHR expected role. OHCHR has responded positively (in a letter sent on 4 May and in a meeting in Geneva on 3 June between the Head of the Capacity- Building and Field Operations Branch of the organisation and the Special Assistant of the HC) to our request and is considering establishing a presence in Uganda by deploying, as a starting point, a Senior Human Rights Adviser who will develop ToRs.

Requesting the HC to establish an IASC-type coordination mechanism at country level to ensure inclusive coordination. HC/UNCT

As mentioned in the February update, bi-monthly IASC meetings have been held regularly since February. The next meeting is in Lira on 15 June: the programme includes a camp visit, a working lunch with district officials and NGOs and a meeting of the IASC members.

Encouraged Country Team to review overall humanitarian strategy with emphasis on information sharing, advocacy, non-food items and protection issues. HC/UNCT

- **Information Sharing:** regular humanitarian updates, minutes of any meeting that OCHA is aware of, or shared with OCHA, is then shared with the whole aid community including UN agencies, donors and NGOs (inter/national) and international organisations (Red Cross movement and IOM). Security advisories are initiated by UNSECOORD (endorsed by the DO/SMT) and shared in due course through OCHA to the whole aid community. OCHA Uganda is in the process of recruiting international and national staff for the Information Management Unit (and not an HIC) that is to be started by early July as indicated in the previous brief.
- **Advocacy:** The UNCT has continued its advocacy work and kept the momentum of Jan Egeland's visit in November 2003. The attention of the international community has been, more than ever before, attracted to the north. There has been an increasing number of missions in northern Uganda by senior UN officials, representatives of donor countries (to name but a few: the OCHA Donor Support Group in March, a Swiss mission (1-4 June), Nairobi donors (14 to 17 June), four visits of German Parliamentarians, ministers from Sweden, from UK, etc), which is an indication of the improved level of awareness raised on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in northern Uganda and the increased interest by the different stakeholders in the situation. The Regional Executive Director of the UN Department of Political Affairs, the African Union and others came to Uganda to meet with the President, with the Religious and Traditional Leaders in the north and try to understand the problem and propose ways to bring a peaceful solution to the conflict.
- The UN HC, in close collaboration with UNCT, wrote to the First Deputy Prime Minister following the defection of a number of LRA rebels to encourage the Government to provide continuous support to its army personnel in the field; to increase measures to protect civilians and thereby to facilitate the assistance delivery to IDPs. In addition to his regular meetings with high officials, the UN HC has suggested to have more regular meetings involving humanitarian assistance between the UN and the First Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees and other Government members concerned.
- **Non-food items:** security permitting, the delivery of basic services to the camps continues unabated. It is still far from satisfying all the basic needs of the people in camps.
- **Protection:** see above.

Encourage agencies to review both their staffing level and presence, with the aim to increase number of qualified emergency officers in Northern Uganda.

- **FAO** increased its staffing level to handle the crisis of the North by fielding an International Emergency Coordinator at the end of November 2003. A national officer

(agronomist) has been recruited and will be permanently based in Gulu to follow-up closely the food security situation from the agricultural side and to follow-up FAO emergency programme. The organisation plans to further increase its operations in the North: a large seeds and tools distribution operation to IDPs will take place in July 2004 for the second rainy season.

- **UNICEF** (refer to paragraph on protection on page 2).
- **WFP** has sub-offices in Gulu and Kitgum Districts in northern Uganda and planning to open a sub-office in Pader District with improvement in the security situation. Food assistance to displaced persons in camps in Pader District is currently managed from the Kitgum sub-office.
- **OCHA** four sub offices are now staffed with an international and a national staff in Gulu, Kitgum, Lira and Soroti. It is considering posting a national officer in Pader when the security improves; until then, the national officer would be working from Kitgum supported by the head of Kitgum sub office.
- **WHO**, after an assessment in Gulu and Kitgum districts, is considering opening a sub office in Gulu, funds permitting.

Support for the strengthening of security arrangements on the ground noting on possible need to increase number of FSOs.

The recruitment of a deputy Field Security Officer for the northern districts is under way by UNSECOORD, once the funds have been fully secured. The SMT has requested to be fully involved in this recruitment as far as the procedure allows, notably by receiving CVs of short-listed candidates.

Other Developments since February 2004

- **UN/ INGOs and Government response to LRA attacks in:**
 - **Adjumani district:** From February to April 2004, there were 30 attacks conducted by the LRA attacks in Adjumani district causing further displacements of some 26,000 refugees and of over 3,000 civilians, to which UNHCR, WFP and the OPM quickly and collaboratively reacted to by distributing food and NFIs and by providing temporary expansion of schools, water points and clinics.
 - **Acholi land:** following the six LRA attacks in Gulu and Kitgum districts over the month of May and June, OCHA led rapid inter agency assessments to the camps of Odek, Pagak, Lukodi, Alokolum, Palabek Gem and Kala Obongo. IDPs were provided with food aid and NFIs and in some cases were relocated to safer camps.
- **A UNDP/BCPR Mission** took place from 12 to 28th May to look at livelihood and recovery, small arms availability and demobilisation. The mission met with the UNCT, Government Representatives, donors and NGOs. Returning from their field trip which included Gulu, Lira, Soroti and Katakwi, their recommendations include improving humanitarian assistance by developing a self-reliance and recovery project, enhancing skills to improve the agricultural (in close collaboration with other agencies) and non-land based livelihood activities, assisting OPM and its DDMC structure to enable the development of and the piloting of a resettlement/reintegration plan in Teso.

Prepared by: Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Uganda, June 2004